THE DEVELOPMENT OF CANADIAN ART

by R.H. HUBBARD

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This book, based on a series of extraordinarily well-attended lectures at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, tells the story of Canadian art from the beginnings of New France in the seventeenth century to the present day. It is the first book of its kind to include in its scope painting, sculpture, architecture, and the decorative arts. It is illustrated with over 200 plates, in colour and black and white.

The author, R. H. Hubbard, M.A., PH.D., F.R.S.C., was appointed Curator of Canadian Art at the National Gallery of Canada in 1947. Since 1954 he has been the Gallery's Chief Curator. He is internationally known for books and lectures on European and Canadian art.

Jacket: TOM THOMSON
Petawawa Gorges, 1915
The National Gallery of Canada

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1 David Milne. *Clouds*

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To Their Excellencies

The Governor-General of Canada and Madame Vanier

in warm appreciation of

their encouragement of the arts

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PREFACE

This short essay marks another stage in the realization of my plan to cover the development of Canadian art from the seventeenth century to the present day. The first stage was represented by a contribution to *The Culture of Contemporary Canada,* edited by Professor Julian Park in 1957, and my *Anthology of Canadian Art,* a mainly pictorial survey published in 1960. The final stage will be reached when time and further experience have permitted me to write the definitive history of Canadian art, at greater length and in more detail.

The present book is based on a series of public lectures given at the National Gallery of Canada in the spring of 1959. The illustrations originally shown on the screen are mentioned in the text (with works in the Gallery's own collection being identified by the initials N.G.C.). Many of them I am able to reproduce here, including the comparisons between Europe and Canada which I find essential to an understanding of our art. The reader may detect in a few passages a similarity of expression between this text and those mentioned above, but this was perhaps inevitable in material that was written almost simultaneously.

I am indebted to the Trustees of the National Gallery and its director Dr Charles Comfort for their encouragement of my work. My warm appreciation is due to M. Roger Duhamel, the Queen's Printer, and M. Pierre Daviault, superintendant of the Bureau of Translations, for the French version of this book. I have also to acknowledge the assistance given me by my colleagues in the curatorial branch of the National Gallery and the debt of gratitude I owe to all those outside the Gallery who have supplied photographs for the illustrations.

R. H. HUBBARD

The National Gallery of Canada
Ottawa

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2 *Aile de la Procure, Séminaire de Québec, 1677*

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF CANADA

In order to survey the development of early Canadian architecture one must cover chronologically the better part of two centuries, from the second half of the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth, and geographically all parts of Canada that were settled before 1850. To do this briefly forces one to suppress a wealth of interesting material; but brevity allows the successive styles of architecture to stand out the more clearly. The literature on the subject is still scanty, consisting mainly of monographs on separate regions or phases,[1] though Professor Gowan's recent book *Looking at Architecture in Canada*[2] has happily appeared to satisfy the need for general treatment of the theme.

1

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the French dominions in North America consisted of a ribbon of settlement along the St Lawrence, trailing off into Acadia at the one end and a chain of posts on the Great Lakes and the Mississippi at the other. The St Lawrence colony was composed of farms stretching back from the river banks in narrow strips. These lands were grouped together in seigneuries. Villages occurred at intervals and contained the parish church and a few other essential community services. There were only three towns: Quebec the capital, Montreal the headquarters of the fur trade, and the much less important Trois-Rivières.

New France offered a striking contrast politically, socially, and economically to the English colonies to the south. It had been settled by order of the Crown and not through the action of the settlers themselves. It was strongly Catholic and had an absolute government and a rigid economic system. Of all its institutions the Church was the most important and, as it turned out, the most permanent. Missionary zeal had rivalled the commercial motive from the start. The clergy had been in Canada well in advance of the settlers, who were brought out in the 1660s to transform a fur-trading outpost into a bastion of empire. Colonization, and with it the mercantile policies of Louis XIV, were largely abandoned at the Grand Monarque's death in 1715, and the colonists were left without strong ties binding them to France. The new environment soon shaped them into Canadians.

This general development is reflected in the particular development of architecture in New France. Architecture must, of course, be divided at the outset into two kinds, urban and rural. Town architecture in Quebec and Montreal resembled its counterpart in France more closely than did that of the countryside. Just as Quebec exhibits the plan of a typical European walled city with its maze of narrow streets, so the tiny Ménage house (1677) in the Rue Saint-Louis recalls similar small buildings in French towns, with their stone gables, steep roofs, and casement windows.

It was the larger town buildings that showed specific resemblances to French architecture of the period. There are still streets in Quebec near the Basilique (the bell tower of which was designed in 1689 by Claude Baillif) where one can picture Laval walking or breathe the atmosphere of Willa Cather's novel, *Shadows on the Rock*. That parts of Quebec are like French towns was confirmed when its streets were used for the filming of a story which took place in Normandy. The principal churches were designed by architects trained in France. One example was the chapel of the Recollect monastery of 1693, which is known through the Richard Short engraving of 1761 and which stood on the site of the present Anglican Cathedral of Quebec. In this case the architect was a member of the Recollect Order, Juconde Drué (1664-1739). It would not be surprising to come upon this building in a French town. The slender spire, the steep gable, the baroque façade with its rusticated portal, the scroll pediment, oval window, and broad stair—all are features used by French provincial architects who were unfettered by the classicism of Paris. The interior of the chapel (as seen by Short soon after the bombardment of 1759)* shows the typical wooden vault, round-headed windows, rectangular panelling, and carved reredos of the period.

Only one building emulated the classic manner of Paris. The Château Saint-Louis was built between 1691 and 1700 by the military architect Gédéon de Catalogne (*c.* 1662-1729) as a governor's palace for Frontenac. It stood on the site of the present Château Frontenac. To judge from engravings, the design was academic, with a portico and with gables in the form of Roman pediments. The strictest symmetry governed the disposition of the wings, the fenestration, and even the chimneys. The lack of sculptural decorations such as relieved the severity of similar buildings in Paris, and the use of the local black stone, probably account for the forbidding aspect the Château Saint-Louis had for early

[1] *P. G. Roy*, Les vieilles églises de la Province de Québec *(Quebec, 1925)*; idem, Vieux manoirs, vieilles maisons *(Quebec, 1927)*; *Ramsay Traquair*, The Old Architecture of Quebec *(Toronto, 1947)*; *Eric Arthur*, The Early Buildings of Ontario *(Toronto, 1938)*; idem, *Gothic'*, Architectural Review, *cxvi (1954), pp. 102-8*; idem, *'Architecture in Ottawa'*, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal, *xxxii (1955), pp. 410-428*; idem, *'In Praise of White Paint'*, R.A.I.C. Journal, *xxxiii (1956), pp. 118-123*. Small Houses of the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries in Ontario *(Toronto, 1940)*; *Gérard Morisset*, L'Architecture en Nouvelle-France *(Quebec, 1949)*; *Alan Gowans*, Church Architecture in New France *(Toronto, 1955)*; *R. H. Hubbard*, *'Canadian*

[2] *Alan Gowans*, Looking at Architecture in Canada *(Toronto, 1958)*. *See also his 'New England Architecture in Nova Scotia'*, Art Quarterly, *xxv (1962), pp. 7-33*.

*Pl. 33

3 *Refectory of the Hôpital-Général, Quebec, 1671*

4 *Villeneuve house, Charlesbourg*

travellers. Other official residences like the Intendant's Palace (the subject of another Short engraving), though equally devoid of ornament, were more informal in design.

Though classicism was virtually absent, certain basic and traditional French elements of style remained: simplicity, regularity, and precision. These are apparent in the design of the seminaries, monasteries, and convents which formed another class of town architecture. Modest and functional is the Seminary of Quebec, begun by Laval in 1677. Its long lines, unbroken planes, and simple patterns of fenestration are aesthetic qualities of the most elemental nature.

Among the few buildings in Quebec which are still preserved intact from the early period are the Ursuline Convent and the Hôpital-Général. A plan drawn in 1785 shows the latter very much as it appears today. The nucleus was the first monastery of the Recollects, begun in 1671. The Intendant Talon laid the corner stone and Frontenac added a wing in 1678. In 1692 Bishop Saint-Vallier, no friend of the friars, transferred it to the Hospital Nuns who built further wings in 1711 and 1737. All the elements of the age-old monastic plan are present: cloister, chapel, refectory, bakery, kitchen as well as the infirmary wards. The oldest part, of 1671-8, contains the chapel with its fine gilt altar-piece and the refectory with its wainscot of rectangular design, beamed ceiling, and original furniture and pewter tableware. The main stair has a fine Baroque sweep. On the outside the Infirmary Wing of 1737 consists of a series of sturdy, unadorned houses relieved only by the chapel spire.

Country building was far removed from academic architecture. The starting-point of its development in the seventeenth century was the French farmhouse, represented in Canada by such examples as the very early Denis house at Neuville. Stone gables, a simple roof, and a lower floor flush with the ground are the characteristics of this house which also has a primitive flatness of wall and roof surfaces and no calculated effects of shadow.

Other and more picturesque features were not slow to appear. First came the exaggeration of a feature not unknown in France. The slightly curved eave is quite common in some houses in villages in Normandy and elsewhere in northern France. But how prominent this upward tilt became in Canada is illustrated in the Villeneuve house (*c.* 1700?) at Charlesbourg. The French hipped roof (*pavillon*) is here made as steep as possible, dwarfing the low stone walls of this most picturesque of cottages. For me, the flaring of the eaves does not represent an adjustment to the climate, as some have suggested; for in actuality these catch moisture and cause leaks. I believe that they were cultivated in order to please the eye, to give houses in this vast landscape a more inviting

shape. The shadows caused by the eaves make the wall surfaces more varied and interesting. In studying the evolution of simple buildings one comes very close to discovering the basic motivations of the artist.

The next steps, however, may have been taken in response to the climate. Late in the eighteenth century appeared a type of cottage—fine examples may be found on the Montmorency road near Quebec—in which the curving eave extends markedly over the front of the house, protecting the door from summer sun and winter snow. The larger shadows that result give the house strong accents of light and shade. This house has a European prototype in the farmhouses of French Flanders. But the further development represented in the Dussault house at Les Écureuils (*c.* 1770) has no precedent in Europe. Here the whole house front is elevated to avoid the snow banks, and a gallery and stair have become necessary to reach the door. Broader proportions have replaced the high, narrow ones of the earlier cottages. The final stage is reached in examples like the Marsil house at Saint-Lambert where posts connect gallery and eaves to form a veranda. The veranda, which appears to be a North American product, occurred in several parts of the continent at roughly the same time. The Dutch in New York produced the type closest to the Canadian, as is seen in examples like the Dyckman house, New York (1798). Some have tried to explain this similarity by supposing that traders going between Montreal and Albany along the Richelieu-Hudson trail took the idea in one direction or the other, the American writers plumping for New York as the source and the Canadians for Quebec. More plausible is the theory that the curving eave in its embryonic form was brought from northern Europe into both regions simultaneously and underwent a parallel evolution in similar colonial environments.

5 *Dussault house, Les Écureuils*

6 *Athanase Denis house, Neuville*

7 *Moquin house, Laprairie, 1807*

A different type of house had already appeared in the country round Montreal. Masons accustomed to building the commonest European type of town houses such as were ranged end-to-end in rows along a street—Maurice Cullen painted some well known examples in Notre-Dame Street, Montreal—took this same house into the open country. In vain do the massive parapets and walled-up chimneys of the Moquin house at Laprairie (1807) prevent the spread of fire to neighbouring houses in the row! A famous painting by Cornelius Krieghoff, *Merry-making**, (1860, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton); shows this town-house-in-the-country fitted up with a veranda and named the Jolifou Inn, the scene of winter revelry.

Rural church architecture underwent a similar development. Here the model was the seventeenth-century village church in France, a rare example of which is found at Armenonville (1658) near Chartres. This simple building is characterized by a steep roof, bull's-eye window in the west front, and a belfry over the doorway. Late in the seventeenth century, at the request of the bishop of Quebec, a particular builder, Maillou, seems to have made a master plan for the Canadian parishes. It evidently governed the design of the church of 1695 at Saint-Laurent on the Île d'Orléans, destroyed in 1864. Its façade is very like that of Armenonville, with double belfry and curving eaves. The only architectural decoration at this period appeared on the inside of a building. The chapel at Cap de la Madeleine (1714) showed, before its recent alteration, a plain barrel vault and a semi-dome over the apse. The clever carpentry of the wooden vault recalls the fact that shipbuilding was practised in the colony. Altar, carved altar-piece, rails, pulpit, and church-wardens' stall provided the only ornamentation.

Some of the best surviving early churches are found on the Île d'Or-

*Pl. 93

8 *Parish Church, Saint-Laurent, Île d'Orléans, 1695*

léans. The parish church at Saint-Pierre (1718) displays the broader proportions and the more effective organization of the building's masses that came after the initial period was past. These qualities are well expressed in the painting of the church made by Charles Comfort in 1935. But the church at Sainte-Famille (1743) is probably the finest of all. Built at the middle of the eighteenth century, it is more amply proportioned than Saint-Pierre. The unbroken lines of eaves and roof and the continuous sweep of the roof round the half-cone at the east end make for a simple unity of design. With its towers grouped at the west end, it possesses the traditional shape of the French church—suggesting that of a springing or crouching animal—which had its classic expression in Notre-Dame in Paris.

2

After the British Conquest of 1759 and the failure of the Americans in 1776 to enlist Quebec and Nova Scotia in the Revolution, the development of the British settlements in what is now Canada proceeded in earnest. In the Maritime regions there had been English settlers since 1749 and a New England colony since 1760, before the Loyalists arrived from the American seaboard in the 1780s. Loyalists from the western frontiers also entered what are now Quebec and Ontario.

The Maritime colonists took their architectural styles from both New and Old England. St Paul's church, Halifax (1750), as seen in the Richard Short engraving of 1761, is scarcely to be distinguished from New England town churches with their Georgian proportions and with their 'Wren' towers translated into timber construction. Later additions have unfortunately obscured all but the tower and a part of the interior of the original St Paul's. St Edward's church at Clementsport, Nova Scotia (1788), is a late eighteenth-century example from the countryside, which shows the colonial Georgian to have become a vernacular style of high merit. The houses of the period have the same simplicity of design (Perkins House, Liverpool, Nova Scotia).

By 1800 in Great Britain the Regency style, with its precision of line and Scotch austerity of design, had replaced the more robust High Georgian. This style is illustrated in Government House, Halifax (1801), designed by Isaac Hildreth (1741-1807). It has severely plain surfaces and a geometric purity in its cubic and cylindrical masses. Most of the larger buildings of the early nineteenth century were, however, designed in the Palladian style, a conservative manner inspired by the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, which had been cultivated in England since before Wren's time. Its chief features were a rusticated lower storey and a temple portico superimposed over the two upper storeys. It is examplified in Province House, Halifax (1811) designed by John Merrick. Another distinguishing mark of the style was the Venetian window: one arched light flanked by two rectangular ones. The Palladian style was employed for one important early building in Upper Canada: Osgoode Hall, the law courts at Toronto, the east wing of which was begun in 1829. It was a style of great impressiveness and dignity.

In one form or another the Classic Revival—the revival of Greek and Roman designs—became the leading architectural style of the first half of the nineteenth century. One of its manifestations was the use of a single column as a monument, as in the Brock Monument at Queenston Heights or Nelson's Pillar (1809) in Montreal, both subjects of Bartlett prints. That the Classic Revival affected French Canadian builders is

9 *Parish Church, Sainte-Famille, Île d'Orléans, 1743 f.*

also apparent in the parish church at Charlesbourg (1828) by Thomas Baillairgé (1791-1859). Though its twin towers are French, it shows strong Anglo-American influence in its pediment crowned with an urn and in the use of oval and Palladian windows; and on the inside in its elliptical vault, squared-off east end, and the details of carving. Quebec architecture of this period excelled in the quality of its interior carved decorations. This is illustrated in the crisply carved classical details of the work of Thomas Baillairgé and his pupil André Paquet (1799-1860)* in various churches. The Canadian carver with his centuries of tradition behind him is the subject of the chapter following. To return to Thomas Baillairgé, his plan for the church of Sainte-Luce at Rimouski (1836) shows another ingenious and charming use of certain Eng-

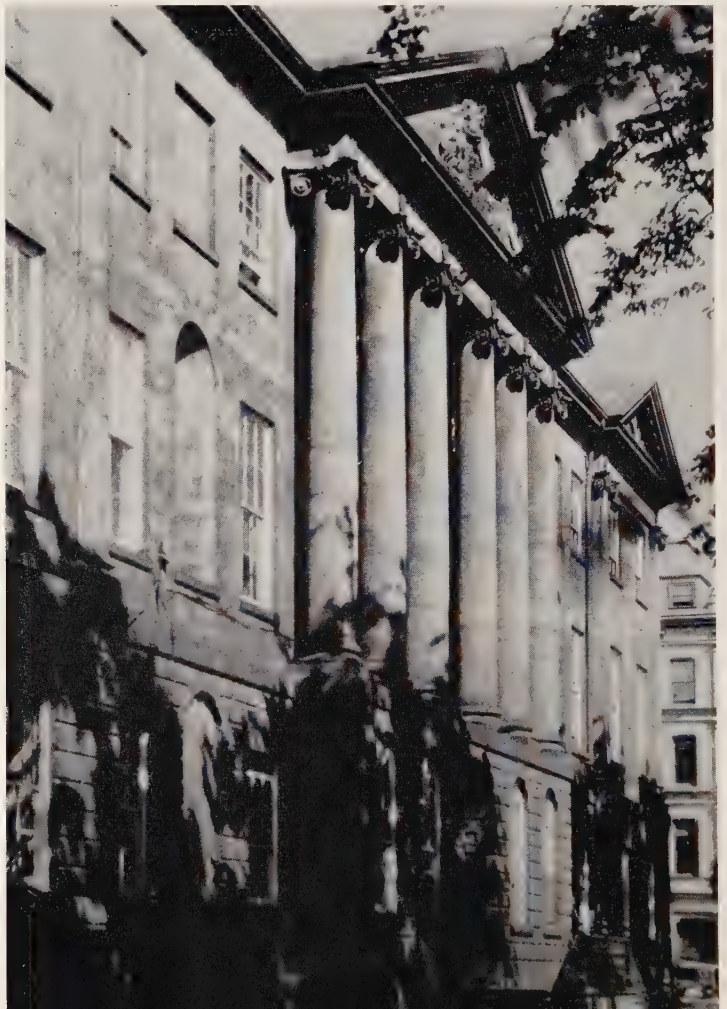
10 Richard Short. *The Church of Saint Paul and the Parade at Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1761*

*Pl. 61

11 *Osgoode Hall, Toronto. East wing, at right, 1829; central section by* CUMBERLAND *and* STORM, *1857; west wing 1844*

12 *Simeon Perkins house, Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1767*

13 JOHN MERRICK. *Province House, Halifax, 1811*



14 Isaac Hildreth. *Government House, Halifax, 1801*

lish features in conjunction with a traditional French Canadian façade with its *clocher* and curving eaves. Yet his unfinished façade of the Basilique in Quebec (1844) indicates that French traditions were uppermost in his consciousness. This important work has much of the academic elegance found in contemporary Paris churches.

Upper Canada in the meantime had undergone a rapid development. After the Loyalists there came waves of settlement from the British Isles. Defence and transportation were among the greatest problems in this vast new territory, and canals seemed to offer a solution to both. The Rideau Canal, which by-passed the international stretches of the St Lawrence and connected the Ottawa River with Lake Ontario, is typical of the ambitious works undertaken by the Royal Engineers. The impressive Bytown end of the canal, the subject of another Bartlett print, indicates that lock-building, with its use of large blocks of masonry, should no more be excluded from the story of nineteenth-century architecture than the great bridges and grain elevators from that of the twentieth.

The new towns that arose on the upper St Lawrence and Lake Ontario

15 Thomas Baillairgé. *Church at Charlesbourg, 1828 (exterior)*

16 Thomas Baillairgé. *Church at Charlesbourg, 1828 (interior)*

17 *House near Kingsville, Ontario*

were very different in appearance from those of French Canada. Villages in Upper Canada formed a rectangular pattern of streets that repeated the larger grid of the townships beyond. Under the vase-shaped elms that lined their streets stood large square houses of brick, cut stone, or timber. One fine stone house at Kingsville, Ontario, is typical of the simplest kind of late Georgian design and displays the huge windows that were remarked on by early visitors to Canada. The generously mortared field stone of its walls—and the whole tradition of using permanent materials as against the timber that was almost universal in the United States—is probably the legacy of the Scotch stonemasons who came to work in many an old Ontario town.

In the border regions of Upper Canada there were a good many

18 *Basilique, Quebec. Bell tower by* CLAUDE BAILLIF, *1689; façade by* THOMAS BAILLAIRGÉ, *1844*

examples of the more literal imitation of Greek and Roman architecture that was practised in the United States. St Andrew's church (1831) at Niagara-on-the-Lake is a fine example of this 'Ultra Classic' manner. The wooden portico of this brick church is a replica of a particular ancient monument, for it is noted on its plan drawn by one Cooper that it was copied from an engraving of the Theseum in Athens. A simpler temple-church (*c.* 1856) without columns—one example among many—is to be found at Thornhill, Ontario. With St Andrew's it illustrates how the architecture of the period made no attempt to harmonize with its settings. The Classic Revival building made a virtue of standing apart from its natural environment, like a statue. The same style was in use for domestic purposes as well. At Chrysler Hall (*c.* 1846)[3] near Morrisburg, the whole central part of the house took the form of a temple, to which wings were added at the sides in imitation of the Palladian villa, to the height of a single story. A more imposing example of the temple-house was Alwington (1839) at Kingston, which was once the seat of Lord Sydenham and unfortunately was destroyed by fire in 1958. Its noble Ionic portico recalls Thomas Jefferson's Capitol at Richmond, Virginia.

Designs inspired by the English Regency style are also to be found in Upper Canada. The plain but well proportioned town houses in such places as Port Hope, and some country examples such as Poplar Hall at Maitland, Ontario (*c.* 1800), reflect the fashionable English style of the period. The knife-edged outlines, the wiry design of cornices and porticoes, the flat roofs, and the simple rectangles of the façades seem almost

19 Cooper. *St Andrew's, Niagara-on-the-Lake, 1831*

20 *Alwington House, Kingston, 1839*

21 *Poplar Hall, Maitland, Ontario*

[3]Now a part of Upper Canada Village.

22 John George Howard. *Colborne Lodge, High Park, Toronto, 1836*

23 *St John's Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Prince Edward Island, 1824*

to approach the functionalism of twentieth-century architects like Le Corbusier. A rigid system of related rectangles extends to the sashes and even to the panes of the windows. Some interiors are exquisite examples of Regency decoration, with fine cornices and mouldings round doors, windows, and chimney-pieces. The staircases of the period illustrate the elegant curves and chaste line that were cultivated by builders. These and other fine details may be studied to good advantage in the Clench house and other buildings at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A few Canadian local preferences of design are evident in Ontario. The gable that breaks the long side of a house is not unknown in Europe but here is employed to deflect rain and sliding snow from the doorway. This feature, along with the elevation of the house well above the ground level and the introduction of the necessary gallery, are to be seen in such examples as the Michael Harris house (1823) at Perth, Ontario.

One other style in vogue for domestic building in the early nineteenth century was the Tuscan Revival. The 'Italian villa' was Renaissance by origin and less formal in character than the classic temple. One of the best examples in Canada is Colborne Lodge (1836), designed by John George Howard (1803-1890) for his estate, High Park, in Toronto. With its spreading eaves and tall windows, its broad 'piazza' and huge chimneys, it is both unassuming and picturesque. It is close in character to the 'prairie house' of the American modern architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The latter's style has been termed 'organic', for such buildings seem almost to grow out of their terrain. The largest example of the Italian villa in Canada was Dundurn (1836), Sir Allan MacNab's mansion in Hamilton.

3

At mid-century the chief architectural style in Canada was the Gothic Revival. This had begun in England in the eighteenth century but did not gain much ground anywhere until the nineteenth. Its extraordinary appeal is often explained in terms of the popular taste for literature dealing with the baronial age, of the romantic theories of the intuitive creativeness of medieval man, or (more practically) of the need for an escape from the realities of the Machine Age. Gothic forms first appeared in Canada as pure surface decoration. A white clapboard church begun in 1824, St. John's at Belfast, Prince Edward Island, is patently

24 THOMAS FULLER. *Drawing for the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, 1859*

25 JAMES O'DONNELL. *Notre-Dame, Montreal, 1824*

Georgian in shape, but its tower is of curious design: a pagoda with pinnacles and pointed Gothic windows. These picturesque details announce the advent of the Gothic Revival.

The first monument of the Gothic Revival was the church of Notre-Dame in Montreal, begun in 1824 after the designs of an eccentric Irish-American architect named James O'Donnell (1774-1830). It was by far the largest church to be built in Canada up to that time. To meet the challenge of size O'Donnell boldly combined the towers of Westminster Abbey with the portals of Peterborough Cathedral and added a touch of Notre-Dame in Paris. The whole design hangs loosely together, the thin lines of the Regency showing through the Gothic veneer. On the inside (as it appeared about 1838 to W. H. Bartlett and before it received its late Victorian incrustations) the simple spaciousness of the Georgian prevailed in spite of the Gothic trimmings.

Two great architectural commissions of the fifties illustrate the full flowering of the romantic revival of medieval styles. They represent the elaborate High Victorian style as opposed to the simple early phases. The design of the first building is actually Norman, which was then considered as an earlier variety of the Gothic. University College, Toronto,

26 *Parliament Hill, Ottawa. Left and right: West and East Blocks by* F. W. Stent, *1859 f.; Centre: Houses of Parliament, by* John A. Pearson, *1919 and; Library, by* Thomas Fuller, *1859 f.*

was begun in 1856 according to the designs of Frederick William Cumberland (1821-1881), a pupil of Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. The building represents the utmost in picturesque irregularity. It combines towers and windows of varied design and has several different floor levels. Yet it has a strength that is lacking in most buildings of its period, and its richly carved doorway is one of the finest architectural details in the country. The original plan of University College was romantic but not altogether impractical. It united elements taken from the Oxford college—chapel, library, students' rooms grouped round stairways, and dean's lodgings—with other features more North American in character: classrooms, offices, and a chemical laboratory in the form of a cathedral chapter house!

The other great undertaking was the group of three buildings on

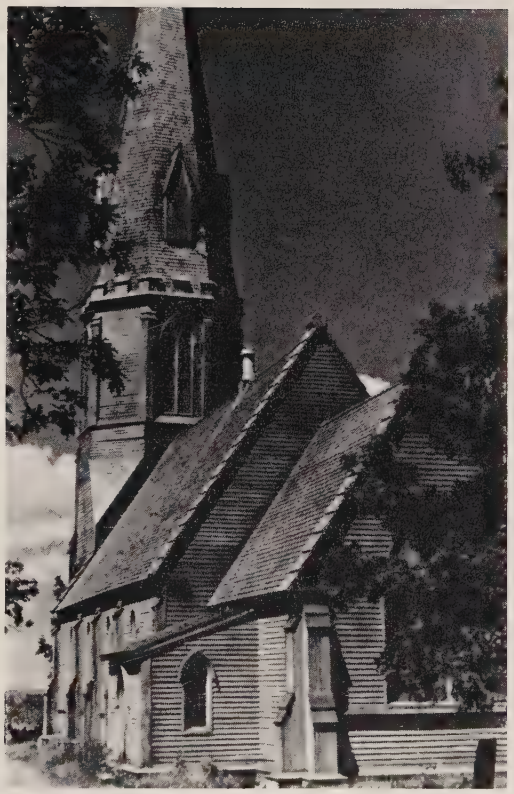
27 Frederick William Cumberland. *University College, Toronto, 1856*

Parliament Hill in Ottawa, one of the world's most impressive Gothic Revival ensembles. Designed in 1859, the buildings were ready in time for the first parliament after Confederation. The central block, containing the Houses of Parliament, was designed by Thomas Fuller (1822-1898) and the two lateral office buildings by Frederick Warburton Stent (fl. 1846-68). Fuller's central block, destroyed by fire in 1916 and replaced by a new building, showed a decided influence from Deane and Woodward's University Museum at Oxford, which embodied Ruskin's ideals in architecture. The Ottawa Parliament was an anthology comprising an English chapter house (which survives as the Library of Parliament), French roofs, German towers, and Ruskin's beloved Italian polychrome stonework. The beauty of the buildings lay not in their details which are often unintentionally amusing—such as the 'faces' on the East Block tower or the patterns on the slate roofs—but in their general silhouette. It was a silhouette of ultimate richness, a forest of spikes, iron crestings, and chimneys. The buildings are at their best when seen from a distance at sunset. It is easy to understand how contemporary travellers like Anthony Trollope could wax lyrical over buildings whose aspiring forms recalled those of the primeval forest and whose style symbolized the planting of old traditions in a new land.

Among the many Gothic Revival churches a few superior designs stand out in Canada. One is the Anglican cathedral at St John's, Newfoundland (1846) by the English architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). Designed in Early English Gothic, this 'cruciform mass piles up splendidly'[4] against the hill. Another is the cathedral at Fredericton, New Brunswick (1845) by the English-trained Frank Wills (1827-?) who worked mainly in the United States. This church, based on studies of a thirteenth-century parish church at Snettisham, Norfolk, stands in the middle of its green close like an English cathedral. With another of Wills's churches, Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal (1856), it shows that the architects of the middle of the century had captured truer medieval proportions. Such buildings possess a compact relationship of part to part and show rich effects of light and shade. A country church at Burton, New Brunswick, which may also be attributed to Wills, illustrates these qualities effectively carried out in wood—a rarity indeed. The Toronto architect William Thomas (1800-1860) designed a town church, St Paul's Presbyterian at Hamilton (1857) which excells by virtue of a fine stone spire—another rarity amid the flimsy wooden towers. But all Gothic Revival buildings, in spite of interesting details, betray in some way the high, narrow proportions of the Victorian period and can never really be confused with the true products of the Middle Ages.

[4] *H. R. Hitchcock, Early Victorian* Architecture in Britain *(New Haven, 1954), i, p. 145; ii Pl. V 15.*

28 Frank Wills. *Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton 1845-53*



29 *Church at Burton, New Brunswick*

30 William Thomas. *St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, 1857*

31 W. T. Thomas. *George Washington Stephens house, Montreal, 1860*

32 Eugène Taché. *Legislative Building, Quebec, 1878-92*

In the rank and file of Gothic Revival buildings these tell-tale marks are only too obvious. The first Trinity College, Toronto, designed in 1851 by Kivas Tully (1820-1905), has a frail and papery look; its thicket of spiny pinnacles may appear to us as nothing but a hazard for the parachutist! A vernacular Gothic sprang up all over the country, with local accents provided by local builders, St. John's Church at Lunenburg, Nova Scotia (1840) with its scroll-saw ornament neatly painted in black and white, is perhaps the finest example of 'Carpenter's Gothic'. Gothic cottages with their infinite variety of fretwork detail are familiar in many parts of eastern Canada, including the old Methodist camp-meeting ground at Grimsby Beach, Ontario. A volume of good photographs should be published on such interesting examples of Canadiana.

To complete the picture, it is worth noting that the Gothic Revival appeared early in the history of western Canada. One of the first buildings in the Red River settlement was St Andrew's church near Winnipeg, a simple stone building of 1849 with Gothic windows.

4

Just after the middle of the nineteenth century another style arrived in Canada to rival the Gothic. It was that curious mixture of Renaissance and Baroque that is now conveniently called 'Second Empire'. Its main inspiration was French, for by this time the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris had become the Mecca of architectural students. In its simplest ('Italianate') form the style is illustrated in the George Washington Stephens house (1860) in Montreal, by William T. Thomas (fl. 1865-80), the son of the Gothic William Thomas of Toronto. Most prominent here were motifs borrowed from the Florentine and Roman palaces of the Renaissance. The solemn pediments over the windows were one evidence of this. There were also some traces of the Georgian. But the trademark of the Second Empire style was the mansard roof, a feature taken from seventeenth-century France. As seen in any typical example, such as the Legislative Building in Quebec (1878-92, by Eugène Taché) or the Town Hall (before 1880) at Barrie, Ontario, the ornament seemed to froth up around the mansard, and the buildings bore in all their features the spindly proportions that made the Late Victorian of the seventies so frail and rickety a style. The effect was enhanced by the bizarre wooden spires that were added indiscriminately to churches, schools, houses, offices, fire halls, and all buildings of the period. They had an infinite variety of design and furnished one proof among many of the ingenuity and teeming imagination of the Victorian builder.

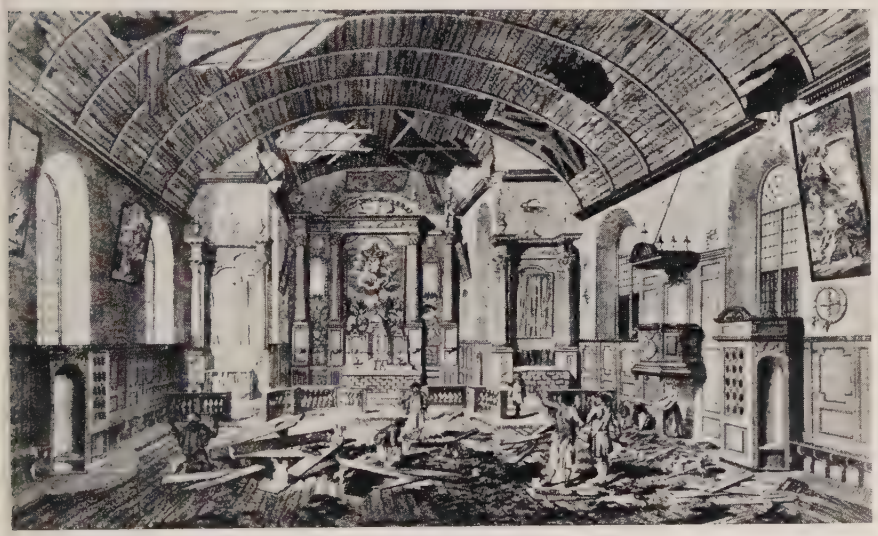
A reaction to the Victorian luxuriance of design was inevitable. It came, in North America, in the form of the Richardsonian Romanesque of the eighties, with its emphatic reassertion of solidity and monumentality in architecture. This topic is dealt with in Chapter IV.

THE ARTS OF FRENCH CANADA

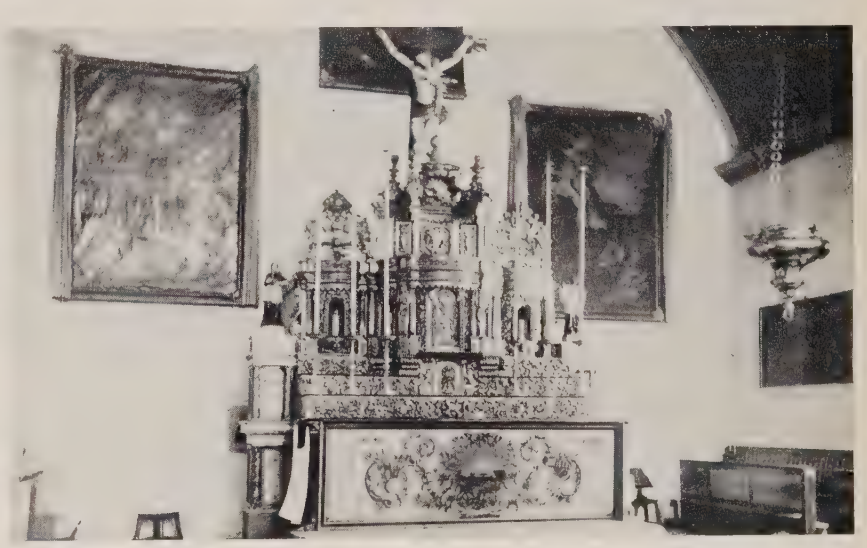
Of all the arts in early French Canada[1] sculpture was the most important. Painting (the subject of the next chapter) along with embroidery and other textiles, silver, and furniture-making played a comparatively minor role in the French colonial period.

1

When one speaks of sculpture in early Canada it is with a different meaning of the word from that which it has in Europe. Canadian sculpture had little to do with the marble and bronze statues, the elegant mythological subjects and allegories that are part of the scheme of Paris and Versailles. It did, however, have a close connection with the provincial religious sculpture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, a subject which is almost ignored in the literature of art. In Canada, moreover, sculpture meant wood-carving exclusively.



33 RICHARD SHORT. *View of the inside of the Récollet Friars Church, Quebec, 1759*

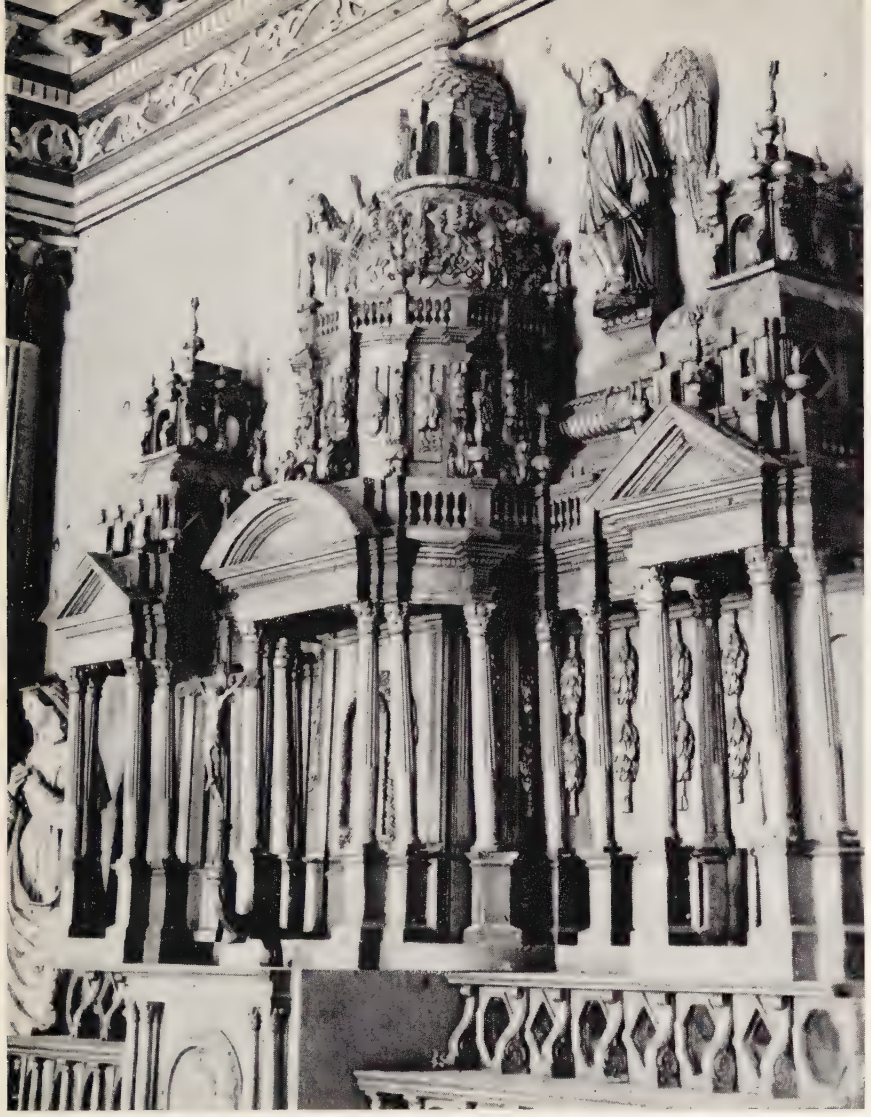


34 *Interior, Church at Lachenaie, Quebec, 1724 Altar-piece by* GILLES BOLVIN, *1737*

This art had got its start quite early, during the main period of colonization in the 1660s. It is from this period that we have records of a few master carvers—arriving from France. The colony was small, with only 14,000 inhabitants by 1698, but the clergy insisted that the churches should be as well fitted out and the mass celebrated as splendidly as in France. The interior of the chapel of the Recollect monastery in Quebec (as seen in the Richard Short engraving of 1761) illustrates the furnishings of the typical town church of the time. Sculptural decoration was concentrated at the east end and consisted of a large reredos (*retable*) behind the high altar, with a smaller one at each side. The main reredos was a sort of façade comprising columns, niches for statues, and an arched frame for a painting. Resting upon the altar table was the altar-piece, called a *tabernacle* because it contained a receptacle for the consecrated bread. A carved pulpit and an altar-rail completed the furnishings.

Expense prohibited the wholesale importation of large objects from France and assured the development of a Canadian school of carving. As early as 1668 the need for establishing the arts and crafts had been recognized, and a school for the purpose was founded by Laval in connection with the Quebec Seminary. What a contrast New France offered in this respect to New England, where the Puritans gave no quarter to frivolities like pictures and sculptures! The pupils of Laval's school fulfilled the needs of the churches which were being built along the St Lawrence by the 1690s, and in doing so they gradually translated the French style into the vernacular.

[1] *General works on the subject include Marius Barbeau,* Québec, où survit l'ancienne France *(Quebec, 1937); Ramsay Traquair,* The Old Architecture of Quebec, op. cit.; *Gérard Morisset,* Coup d'œil sur les arts en Nouvelle-France *(Quebec, 1941);* The Arts of French Canada *(exhibition catalogue, Detroit, 1946);* Exposition rétrospective de l'art au Canada français *(exhibition catalogue, Quebec, 1952).*



35 Jacques Leblond de Latour. *Altar-piece, Sainte-Anne de Beaupré*

In a country church like that at Lachenaie (begun in 1724 and demolished in 1883) there was no reredos but only a plain east wall against which the altar-piece, carved by Gilles Bolvin (1711-1766) of Trois-Rivières, stood out as the chief accent along with a few paintings. The richly gilt *tabernacle* at Lachenaie took its general form from seventeenth-century French examples in village churches in France. As they usually stood quite alone the Canadian examples tended to be larger and richer. But the elements were the same: a semi-architectural composition, baroque in conception, with columns and rich ornament. The statuettes which were incorporated into the design of the French example were also the prototypes for the Canadian ones. In fact such small objects as these were easily imported and copied. Not only wooden, but also silver, figures were sent out from France as gifts, as was the case with the late seventeenth-century Paris silver statuettes of the *Virgin* and *St Joseph* which form part of the 'Huron Treasure' in the Indian chapel at Jeune-Lorette. These figures exemplify the European Baroque style by their easy naturalism, flexibility of pose, and accomplishment of modelling. Light plays in a picturesque way over the ruffled garments, and the spiral arrangement of the drapery makes the figures appear to be in motion while at the same time binding them into a tight unity. Close in style to these imported figures are a few which most probably were made in New France, such as the small eighteenth-century *St Aloysius Gonzaga* in silvered wood at the Ursuline Convent, Quebec; it has the refinement and slender grace which are the distinguishing marks of French art.

To return to Laval's school of arts and crafts, its leading master was Jacques Leblond de Latour (1670-1715) who with his pupils carved the original altar-piece for the church at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré about 1700. It is now in the Chapelle Commémorative at Sainte-Anne. Born at Bordeaux, Leblond had learned his art before going to Quebec about 1690 but he was inventive enough to strike out in new directions once he was there. The Sainte-Anne altar-piece is surprisingly large and contrasts with its French counterparts by being so strictly architectural in design. Its miniature but correct Corinthian columns, its porticos, pediments, and dome indicate a familiarity, perhaps gained through the study of engravings, with the great buildings of Paris in the age of Louis XIV.

A number of statues must surely have been carved by Leblond and his circle. Though none is signed, a small *Virgin and Child,* originally in the church at Saint-Irénée and now in the Archbishop's Palace at Chicoutimi, has been attributed to him by Marius Barbeau. The pose has a pronounced baroque sway but the folds are rather coarsely carved, as would be understandable in the work of a decorative carver who was obliged to turn his hand to figures. In the colonies one had to be a jack of all trades. The face is cramped and flat and looks as if it had been merely stamped upon the figure. Similar characteristics are found in several other early figures, not necessarily by the same hand, such as the *St Roch* in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Of fair size, this statue is rather too heavily coated with gesso under the gold leaf to be very sensitive in feeling, but it has enough of the twisting pose, freedom of movement, and plastic modelling to connect it fairly closely with European art.

This represents the first stage in the 'reduction' of the European style,

36 ANONYMOUS. *St Roch*

37 ANONYMOUS. *The Christ Child*

38 ANONYMOUS. *The Virgin and Child (Art Gallery of Toronto)*

39 ANONYMOUS (French?). *The Virgin and Child (Hôpital-Général, Quebec)*

which occurred in all colonial arts. It happened not only because of isolation and the lack of opportunity to study the human figure but also as a sort of adaptation to the needs of a simpler society. Folk-art has always played an important part in Canadian art, and I must speak of folk-carving before turning to the more cosmopolitan sculpture of New France.

A second stage in the process of reduction is marked by an early eighteenth-century statuette at Jeune-Lorette of the *Infant Christ* (*c.* 1736?) which is perhaps a work of the studio of Noël Levasseur, the Quebec sculptor whose work is discussed below. At any rate the head, which is a little too large, the stereotyped expression, and the puppet-like pose are evidences of the further loss in technique. In compensation the figure has a considerable charm of naïveté. Similar to it is a small *Virgin and Child* (Art Gallery of Toronto) from the church at Giffard, whose features are even more stylized. The folds of the drapery are shallower; there has been a loss of bulk; and the figure is as straight as the oak branch from which it was carved. The growing distance between the colonial carver and the French sculptor becomes apparent when this figure is compared to a *Virgin and Child* in the Hôpital-Général, Quebec, which is said to have been brought from France in 1648. It has the

40 ANONYMOUS. *Altar-frontal (detail of the silvered ground)*

41 ANONYMOUS. *Altar-frontal (Jeune-Lorette Church)*

full modelling, graceful pose, and classic facial features of European sculpture. The Canadian statuette admittedly shows its lingering acquaintance with the French model by imitating the European trick of allowing the lower leg to show through the drapery, but commits the curious error of not making the foot correspond with the leg!

Quebec folk-carving exhibits considerable variety. Some of it is feminine and doll-like, suggesting that it was executed by the nuns who are known to have done carving and gilding. Such may be the case with the wooden *Altar Frontal* at Jeune-Lorette, carved before 1722. The gilt floral wreath encircling the figure of the Virgin is similar to the garlands that appear as motifs in the nuns' embroideries. On the silvered ground is an incised design, the details of which include plants, birds, and a naïve picture of a Huron girl standing before a chapel and an Indian hut. For all its lack of perspective and proportions this picture shows a fine sense of pattern and is one of the first examples of local subject-matter in Canadian art. The unknown artist was not accomplished in technique but was direct and sincere in his approach to his art.

2

In the meanwhile a number of reasonably well informed sculptors were active in the colony. In early eighteenth-century Quebec, Noël Levasseur (1680-1740) was at the head of a studio which belonged to his family[2] for a total of about seventy years. He inherited it from his father and grandfather; his brothers, sons, nephews, and cousins worked in it with him; and the younger members of the family took it over at his

42 NOËL LEVASSEUR. *Altar-piece, 1722 (Hôpital-Général, Quebec)*

[2] *Including besides Noël his cousin Pierre-Noël (1690-after 1750) and his sons Jean-Baptiste Antoine (1717-1775) and François-Noël (1703-1794). See Marius Barbeau,* Les Levasseur *(Montreal, 1948).*

43 Noël Levasseur. *Altar wall, 1732 f.* (*Ursuline Chapel, Quebec*)

44 Noël Levasseur. *Pulpit, 1732 f.* (*Ursuline Chapel, Quebec*)

45 Louis le Vau. *Collège des Quatre Nations, Paris, 1660*

46 Noël Levasseur. *Statuettes from altar-piece, 1722* (*Hôpital-Général, Quebec*)

death. Though a family affair, the studio retained some of the traditions of the medieval guild such as apprenticeship and the bachelor's journey.

One of Noël Levasseur's earliest commissions was an altar-piece for the chapel of the Hôpital-Général in Quebec, which he executed in 1722. His design is strictly architectural and suggests that he had been a pupil of Leblond de Latour. The dome, portico, clustered columns, and curving wings prove, however, that he had been inspired by an actual Paris building, the Collège Mazarin (or Collège des Quatre-Nations, now the Institut de France) designed in 1660 by Louis Le Vau in the most formal manner of the Louis Quatorze style. Noël Levasseur must have known this building through the engraving by Pérelle*. In the niches of the altar-piece are little wooden statuettes of saints†, carved with such precision as to suggest that silver statuettes were their models. Their sprightly elegance and urbane expressions seem to me symbolic of the way in which the little colonial capital of Quebec imitated the mother country in all things.

The Levasseurs' first big commission was the altar wall of the Ursuline Chapel in Quebec, which they began in 1734. A magnificent reredos, rich and baroque and painted in gold, white, and black covers the entire wall space. Compared in style to earlier carvings in Canada this composition shows a considerable loosening-up of the design. By this time Noël had freed himself from his dependence on architecture and was using Louis Quatorze ornament with some abandon. Curving forms now elide the sharp corners, though the composition retains its underlying rectangular structure. The reredos includes carved figures of various sizes and a liberal sprinkling of reliefs. If the altar-piece is studied as a detail of the ensemble it may be observed how the ruffled surface is broken up into many facets of gilt ornament. The pulpit, rich with appliqué carv-

47 Levasseur Studio. *Altar-piece* (*Saint-François Church*)

48 Pierre Levasseur. *St. Paul, 1742* (*Batiscan Church*)

49 Anonymous (French?) *The Virgin and Child* (*Sœurs de la Providence, Montreal*)

*Pl. 45
†Pl. 46

ings of foliage, is adorned with large scrolls at top and bottom.

It has been noted that the Levasseurs allowed their figures to grow from tiny statuettes to life-size statues. Two large figures of *St Peter* and *St Paul* (1742) in the church at Batiscan are signed by Pierre Levasseur. In spite of their size they betray, however, the amateur's approach to the problem of large scale. They are simply enlarged statuettes with the same elegantly curled hair, sharp features, and mannered pose that characterized the little figures on the Hospital altar. More typical of the Levasseurs' output and certainly more picturesque is a small polychromed *St Joachim* at the Ursuline Convent, Quebec, the stiffness of whose gestures is counteracted by the free-flowing motif of the vine in gold leaf that decorates the red and blue draperies.

Decorative carving was always the strong point of the Levasseurs. Their style evolved with the passage of time, partly in response to stimuli that came from the Régence and Louis Quinze styles in France and partly in the natural course of their own development. Characteristic of their work at the middle of the eighteenth century is the altar-piece in the church at Sainte-Famille on the Île d'Orléans*, executed between 1743 and 1749. Its main feature is a large canopy of scrolls that gives the design lightness and gaiety and makes the Ursuline work seem heavy in comparison. Here all the structural members are spun over with delicate foliage and scrolls. The destruction of the plane and the straight line was characteristic of Rococo art everywhere in the eighteenth century; and it would be more apparent here if the panels between the columns were removed, as they are probably later additions. A similar altar-piece (*c.* 1750?) now in a roadside chapel at Saint-François, Île d'Orléans, shows the spaces left open. The small scale, the rustic freedom of design, and the excellent craftsmanship set this Canadian work quite definitely apart from academic sculpture in Europe. There the general effect was always more important than the individual parts, and the small details were often merely stamped out in plaster.

50 ANONYMOUS. *The Virgin and Child* (*École du Meuble, Montreal*)

51 ANONYMOUS. *The Virgin and Child* (*Hôtel-Dieu, Montreal*)

3

Another school of wood-carvers had meanwhile grown up in Montreal, who had less contact with Europe than the Levasseurs. This did not prevent an interesting development from taking place, and it is possible to illustrate this in another series of early statues, all anonymous. The starting point is represented by a *Virgin and Child* at the Sœurs de la Providence, Montreal, which may well have been imported from France in the early years. It has the plasticity, the swirling drapery, the lifelike stance, and classic face to mark it as a European work. Then came the inevitable reduction in style which in Montreal took the form of curious distortions of the poses and faces. In a *Virgin and Child* (École du Meuble, Montreal) carved in elm wood, the folds have lost their depth. The sway of the body has been exaggerated especially in the regions of the neck and head. The eyes and forehead of the classic face have been thrown out of line as in the expressive figures of El Greco. The final stage is reached in a polychromed *Virgin and Child* in oak at the Hôtel-Dieu, Montreal, where the drapery takes the form of a series of flat slabs. The neck and arms are like sticks; the whole figure is stiff and the child like a puppet; and the faces are stylized into a scheme of slants and bulges. This is a folk-art of strong character.

In Montreal a studio somewhat like that of the Levasseurs in Quebec was headed by Paul Labrosse (1697-1760?)[3] whose work epitomized the strongly accented sculpture of his region. In 1741 for the church at Longueuil he carved an altar-piece and with it a set of apostle statuettes

[3] *He was a member of the Jourdain-Labrosse family which also included a number of builders and carvers.*

*Pl. 59

52 Paul Labrosse. *Statuettes of Apostles (Longueuil Church)*

In the same church a later school of Montreal carvers undertook the task of decorating the whole interior. The leader of this school was Louis Quévillon (1749-1823) whose studio housed a number of apprentices and associates.[5] Beginning in 1813, they covered the walls and ceiling with a grand mixture of baroque and rococo ornament that included a coffered vault, giant columns, heavy cornices, and an elegant tulip-shaped pulpit. Details such as the side-altar in the shape of a sarcophagus and the altar-piece, both by Quévillon in 1806, illustrate the garlands, swags and scrolls that entwine the surfaces in a picturesque but undisciplined way. The style was naïve, old-fashioned, and over-elaborate but of undoubted vigour. The Quévillon school carried the early traditions of New France well into the nineteenth century until the swags and scrolls of the Rococo were lost among the crockets and gables of the Gothic Revival.

whose mannered poses, swinging drapery, and caricatured faces make them unique in Canadian art. By their restless movement they remind one a little of the figures in the paintings of Mathis Grünewald, which quiver with emotion. A fine *Virgin and Child* (Art Gallery of Toronto) in elm wood, dating probably from the middle of the eighteenth century, comes originally from the old Notre-Dame in Montreal and may be by Labrosse himself. It has a truly rococo lightness and slenderness, a delicate flutter of the garments as if a light breeze were blowing on them, and a rare charm of expression.

I shall not discuss at any length the Montreal sculptors of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as they are better known in the existing literature than most other early artists. Philippe Liébert[4] (1732-1804) was active from the 1760s to the end of the century. His style was *retardataire,* resembling in the 1770s that of the Levasseurs in the thirties. But he struck an original note in two relief carvings of about 1772 on the sacristy doors of the church at Sault-au-Récollet. The upper panels of each door represent scenes from the story of Samson; the lower are scenes from the early history of the parish. Thus on the right door at the top is Samson carrying off the gates of hostile Gaza, while at the bottom is a view of the first mission to the heathen Indians at Sault-au-Récollet, with a *curé* who has just come from celebrating mass in the church. By an old convention of Christian art the scene at the top is probably a biblical prefiguration of the victory recorded at the bottom.

[4]*Gérard Morisset,* Philippe Liébert *(Quebec, 1943).*

[5]*These included Joseph Pépin (1770-1842), René Saint-James (1783-1835), Paul Rollin (1789-1837), Alexis Millette (1793-1870), and others. See Émile Vaillancour,* Une maîtrise d'art au Canada *(Montreal, 1920).*

53 Phillipe Liébert. *Sacristy doors (Sault-au-Récollet Church)*

54 Louis Quévillon. *Altar-piece, 1806 (Sault-au-Récollet Church)*

4

By this time the greatest flowering of Canadian talent in sculpture had taken place in Quebec under the auspices of the Baillairgé family.[6] François Baillairgé (1759-1830) was the first Canadian sculptor to visit Europe. In 1789 he returned to Quebec from his studies at the Académie Royale in Paris bringing with him a large assortment of European designs. These he proudly displayed in 1790 in his first big commission, the grandiose interior decorations of the Basilique in Quebec. His drawing which is extent for the churchwardens' stall (*banc d'œuvre*)* is a good example of his eclecticism. In this design he mingled several neo-classic motifs of his own day such as the pilaster and the cenotaph with others taken from the seventeenth century such as the baroque representation of the Immaculate Conception at the top. It was as if he were trying in one stroke to make up for Canada's lack of monuments of past ages by compounding them all into his work.

Baroqueness is present in his smaller carvings, the statuettes and reliefs. But here the style became more domesticated and agreeable as time went on. A small *Virgin* in the Quebec Seminary was probably inspired in the first instance by Murillo; but its charm is due not to Murillo but to the simple and natural portrayal of youth which he achieved through his own technique of carving. An *Assumption* (*c.* 1800), the fragment of a relief from Les Éboulements, also derives from Murillo or Rubens but it has a realism in the face and drapery that makes

[6] *Jean Baillairgé (1726-1805) was the founder of this dynasty. Besides members of the family the studio included André Paquet (1793-1860), Louis Berlinguet (1789-1863), and others.*

**Pl. 56*

55 Paul Labrosse (?). *The Virgin and Child (Art Gallery of Toronto)*

56 François Baillairgé *Drawing for Churchwardens' Stall, 1799, Basilique, Quebec*

57 François Baillairgé. *The Virgin and Child (Detroit Institute of Arts)*

58 François Baillairgé. *The Assumption; fragment from Church at Les Éboulements*

it fresh and sincere. The dignity and elegance of other figures such as the *Virgin and Child* in the Detroit Institute of Arts and the *Virgin* and *St John* statuettes at the National Gallery of Canada, have never been excelled in work on this scale. Canadian carvers always felt more at home with small than with large compositions. An amusing proof of Baillairgé's classicism is found in the fact that he copied the pose of the famous antique marble, the *Venus de' Medici,* in the *Virgin* of the latter group.

Thomas Baillairgé (1791-1859),[7] the son of François, purged his father's manner of all its floridity. As he had not studied in Europe his influences came from what he could see about him in Canada. One writer suggests that he was 'discreetly inspired' by the late Georgian interior of the Anglican Cathedral of Quebec (1804). However that may be, his work is an example of the marriage of French Canadian and English art forms which was possible at that time and which is also seen in the silver of the period. His interior decorations of 1828 for the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec achieve an all-over classic simplicity through the use of plain white walls articulated by noble Corinthian pilasters. The frieze consists of English Georgian urns; the garlanded door-frames are French; and the pediment is crowned by two English flaming pots. The altar-piece with its gilt French dome is splendid but restrained in design. Finally, the entire scheme fits well into the Canadian tradition by virtue of the sensitive hand-carving of every detail.

At the church of Sainte-Famille on the Île d'Orléans, about 1820, Thomas Baillairgé surrounded the rococo Levasseur altar-piece with an

[7] *Alan Gowans, 'Thomas Baillairgé',* Art Bulletin, *xxxiv 1952), pp. 117-137.*

architectural design in which smooth white surfaces and continuous lines prevail. The total impression is one of spaciousness and calm dignity. Details of the carvings on the wainscot show not only his fine craftsmanship but the use of some delightfully original motifs such as hollyhocks and garden lilies. The interior of Saint-François on the same island includes fine details of architecture carved by André Paquet.

5

In the later nineteenth century the carving of statues and reliefs miraculously survived the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution, a movement which manifested itself in the wholesale production of plaster saints painted in crude colours. Jean-Baptiste Côté (1834-1907)[8] was the pupil of a pupil of Thomas Baillairgé. When the demand for church carvings declined he eked out his livelihood by carving ships' figureheads and by making newspaper illustrations in woodcut. In his relief of the *Last Supper* (*c.* 1870, N.G.C.) he copied the famous Leonardo composition but added some naïvely realistic heads that betray his leanings towards caricature. His Judas distinctly resembles the villain in a Victorian melodrama.

The last of a long line of sculptors was Louis Jobin (1844-1928) whom Marius Barbeau discovered working in his carver's shop at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré as a very old man. His elongated figures of *St Luke* and *St John* (National Museum of Canada, Ottawa) have enough of Chartres about them to prove that he was influenced by the Gothic Revival. They also show him as something of a mystic, with an insight into one important aspect of his people's personality. But it is important to remember that a good portion of Jobin's work is so much in the spirit

59 Thomas Baillairgé. *Interior of the Church at Sainte-Famille Altar-piece by the* Levasseur Studio

60 Jean-Baptiste Côté. *The Last Supper*

61 André Paquet. *Detail of carving, 1838 (Church at Saint-François)*

[8] *Marius Barbeau,* Côté the Woodcarver *(Toronto, 1943).*

of New France that it is sometimes mistaken for eighteenth-century carving. Examples of this style are the two reliefs of *Flying Angels* in the Quebec Museum, with their star-strewn rose and blue robes. These lead one to believe that he would have been happier living in the period of the Levasseurs.

6

Among the decorative arts of early Canada the ecclesiastical crafts held the place of honour. Some products of this class of colonial art have proved upon scholarly examination to be of surprisingly high quality by European standards. This is true of the earliest of all the crafts, embroidery,[9] which had been begun by the nuns soon after their arrival in the 1630s. Two altar-frontals are early examples of great beauty. One is

62 François Ranvoyzé. *Ciborium, Monstrance, and Chalice*

63 Louis Jobin. *St Luke*

64 Louis Jobin. *St John*

65 Louis Jobin. *Flying angel*

a very baroque example from the late seventeenth century, displaying a medallion which contains a picture of the Assumption; it is in the Ursuline Convent, Quebec. The other is a sumptuous one executed in gold and silver and coloured threads, representing the dove of the Holy Ghost

[9] *Marius Barbeau,* Saintes artisanes *(2 vol., Montreal, 1943).*

66 Jeanne Le Ber. *Frontal with Holy Ghost design*

67 Anonymous. *Arrow sash*

68 Anonymous. *Tufted bedspread*

amid garlands and baskets of fruit; it was worked by the recluse Jeanne Le Ber (1662-1724) and is now in the Musée Notre-Dame, Montreal.

Early Canadian silver[10] also maintained a high standard of quality. Paul Lambert (1691-1749)[11] was the most important earlier silver-

[10] *Ramsay Traquair,* The Old Silver of Quebec *(Toronto, 1940).*

[11] *Gérard Morisset,* Paul Lambert *(Quebec, 1945).*

smith, but the art reached its highest point when François Ranvoyzé (1739-1819)[12] and Laurent Amiot (1764-1839) made their successful combination of French eighteenth-century and English Regency designs in a series of fine pieces. One example by Ranvoyzé is a monstrance (*c.* 1780) at the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, Montreal*.

Among the folk-arts embroidery and weaving have flourished in French Canada until fairly recent times. The tufted bedspreads with their pine-tree and other landscape motifs, the hooked rugs, and the arrow sashes (*ceintures fléchées*)[13] are among the most attractive of the textiles. Canadian pine furniture had simplicity and rustic charm. Most examples, such as one fine *armoire* in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, date from the early nineteenth century. They illustrate the amazing hardihood of eighteenth-century designs like the shaped panel. But the Industrial Revolution wiped out all but a few traces of the traditional crafts before their revival in the twentieth century.

69 *Two-tiered cupboard, 18th-19th century*

[12]*Gérard Morisset,* François Ranvoyzé *(Quebec, 1942).*

[13]*Marius Barbeau,* Ceinture fléchée *(Montreal, 1945).*

**Pl. 62*

EARLY PAINTING IN CANADA

The architecture, sculpture, and decorative arts of early Canada have already been discussed. At this point it is convenient to examine the beginnings of painting,[1] the art which was eventually to become the country's principal means of expression. In the literature on the subject it is interesting to note the disagreement among writers as to when a Canadian style in painting arose. One fairly recent author[2] assumes that it appeared only after 1940 when the Montreal school espoused modern international movements in art. Others, especially the chroniclers of the National Movement,[3] seem to place it about 1913 with the rise of the Group of Seven. Still others,[4] mostly older writers, date it from about 1850, the in period of Kane and Krieghoff. And so it is an open question. I have taken as my starting point the period when pictures were first painted in Canada. That was about 1670. In this way one will not miss any hint of Canadianism that appeared in the interval between that date and the end of the nineteenth century.

1

New France in the seventeenth century did not frown on painting as did New England. In the latter colony the portrait was the only form of painting tolerated, because it immortalized the Puritan divines. In New France religious pictures were needed for the furnishing of churches. Yet painting played a subordinate role to sculpture throughout the French régime. The main reason for this was that painting depended more than wood-carving on a mastery of the human figure, and academies were lacking in the colony.

The story begins with the transplanting to Canada of French painting as it was in the seventeenth century. This was largely the work of one man, Frère Luc (1614?-1685),[5] a painter born at Amiens whose name had been Claude François before he joined the Recollect Order in 1641. In Paris he had been a pupil of Simon Vouet, court painter to Louis XIII. The religious pictures which he painted for a number of Quebec churches during his short stay in the colony in 1670-1 reflect the drama and richness of the Baroque style. They have nothing of style to connect them with Canada, though one large canvas has Canadian subject-matter of a sort. *France Bringing the Faith to the Indians of New France* (Ursuline Convent, Quebec) is a full-blown allegory after the manner of the Medici series by Rubens. It takes place before a river landscape (the St Lawrence) with Indian huts. A regal figure of France presents a picture of the Holy Family to an Indian, while the actual Holy Family presides in the sky. The presence of a picture within a picture gives the scene an added interest.

Frère Luc painted portraits of several Quebec personages, including the austere bishop, *François de Laval-Montmorency* (Université Laval, Quebec). This is a typical French portrait of its time. The simplicity of its triangular composition, which may owe something to Philippe de Champaigne, does not blind one to the comparative accomplishment of technique that shows up in the lifelike drawing, the volume in space, the free play of light over the figure, and the expression of human character. A few early portraits of nuns also exist, painted by unknown French-trained artists, and these show similar characteristics. One example is the *Mère Catherine de Saint-Augustin* of 1668 in the Hôtel-Dieu, Quebec.

Unlike the sculptors the early painters were never able to set up a school, and painting rapidly declined to the level of amateur and then to 'primitive' art. In a recent article Dr W. S. A. Dale has explained this reduction of the European style.[6] He compared the above portrait with a later one for which it possibly served as model, the *Mère Louise Soumande* (1708, Hôpital-Général, Quebec) by the Canadian-born painter Michel Dessaillant (fl. 1701-10). This later portrait has lost the softness and flexibility of the earlier one; the figure is now as hardly modelled as if it were carved from hickory wood.

Such was the case with the *Votive Picture of Madame Riverin**. The lady was the wife of a member of the Sovereign Council, and she set up this little painting at Sainte-Anne de Beaupré in 1703 to commemorate her escape from shipwreck with her four children through the intercession of the saint. The tiny figures are arranged like a row of ninepins. Flatness has taken the place of depth in space. But the colours are rich and deep. The process of reduction continued as time went on. In the *Votive of Captain Simonin* of the ship 'L'Aimable Marthe' (1747, Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, Quebec) the waves and rocks of the St Lawrence, the ships, and the holy figures all form part of a flat tapestry-like pattern. The final stage of primitiveness is seen in a picture of 1754, the *Votive of the Survivors of the Shipwreck at Lévis*† (Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré). Here perspective has vanished and the inscription itself forms

[1] *See in addition to the general references (page 17):* *Gérard Morisset,* Peintres et tableaux *(2 vol., Quebec, 1936-7);* *F. St G. Spendlove,* The Face of Early Canada *(Toronto, 1958).*

[2] *Maurice Gagnon,* Sur un état actuel de la peinture canadienne *(Montreal, 1945).*

[3] *F. B. Housser,* A Canadian Art Movement, the Story of the Group of Seven *(Toronto, 1926).*

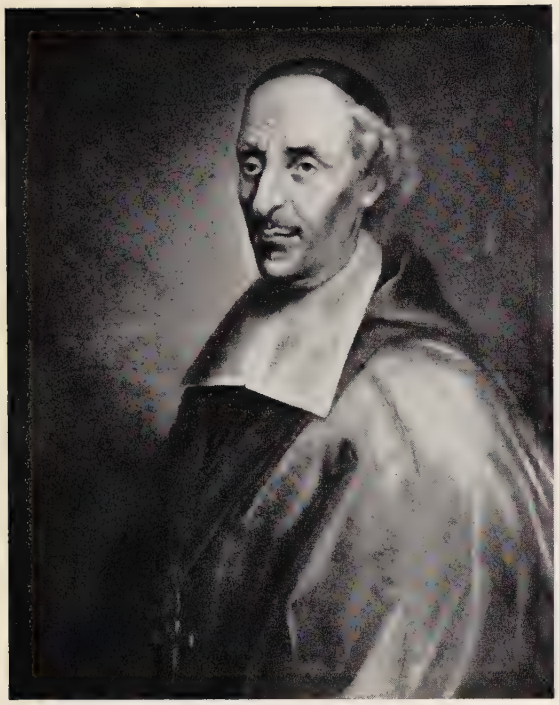
[4] *A. H. Robson,* Canadian Landscape Painters *(Toronto, 1932).*

[5] *Gérard Morisset,* La vie et l'œuvre du Frère Luc *(Quebec, (1944).*

[6] *'Primitives and Provincials in Canadian Art',* Canadian Art, *xiv (1957), pp. 28-33.*

*Pl. 73

†Pl. 74



70 Frère Luc. *François de Laval-Montmorency*

71 Anonymous *Mère Catherine de Saint-Augustin, 1668*

72 Michel Dessaillant *Mère Louise Soumande, 1708*

a part of the all-over design. A book has recently been published on votive pictures found in European churches;[7] their style is very close to that of the Canadian votives, for folk-art is much the same in all periods and places. The work of the good folk-painter is spaceless and lacking in unity, but it is lively and as brightly coloured as a bunch of autumn leaves. The primitives of today like Grandma Moses use essentially the same style.

2

The next phase in the development of Canadian painting began in the British colonial period. This comprised a period of about one hundred and twenty years following the founding of Halifax in 1749. Ten years after that date the British conquest of New France broke the ties between Canada and France. The new influences on art at this time were English, and one of them was of special importance. Landscape, England's great contribution to European art, came to Canada through the agency of a number of 'topographical artists'. These were mostly engineer and artillery officers of the garrison who were trained in the days before photography to record their surroundings in the medium of water colour. The drawings of these amateurs were often engraved and widely published to satisfy the great European hunger for information about the New World.

The most interesting topographical artist was Lieutenant (later Lieutenant-General) Thomas Davies (*c.* 1737-1812)[8] whose tours of duty brought him to Canada several times after 1759. Davies had a wonderful feeling for pattern and colour and a rare sensitivity of vision that enabled him to express the inner mystery of a scene. These qualities may be appreciated to the full in many of the water colour drawings in a portfolio which the National Gallery of Canada recently acquired from the Earl of Derby's library, especially in the *View on the River La Puce** (1782) with its bright, glassy water and tall, dark cliff or *Great Seneca Falls* (1766) which shows that his eyes were open to the ultimate richness of the North American autumn. In style he may perhaps be best compared with Henri Rousseau, *le douanier,* the most famous of all Sunday painters.

Some other painters had a better acquaintance than Davies with the styles of contemporary professional water colour artists in England. One was George Heriot (1766-1844), a civil servant who had been trained as a soldier. During his stay at Quebec he made several trips through

[7] *L. Kriss-Rettenbeck,* Das Votivbild *(Munich, 1958). See also Ciarrocchi and Mori,* Tavolette votive italiane *(1960).*

[8] *K. M. Fenwick and C. P. Stacey, 'Thomas Davies',* Canadian Art, *xiii (1956), pp. 271-6.*

**Pl. 76*

73 ANONYMOUS. *Votive of Madame Riverin, 1703*

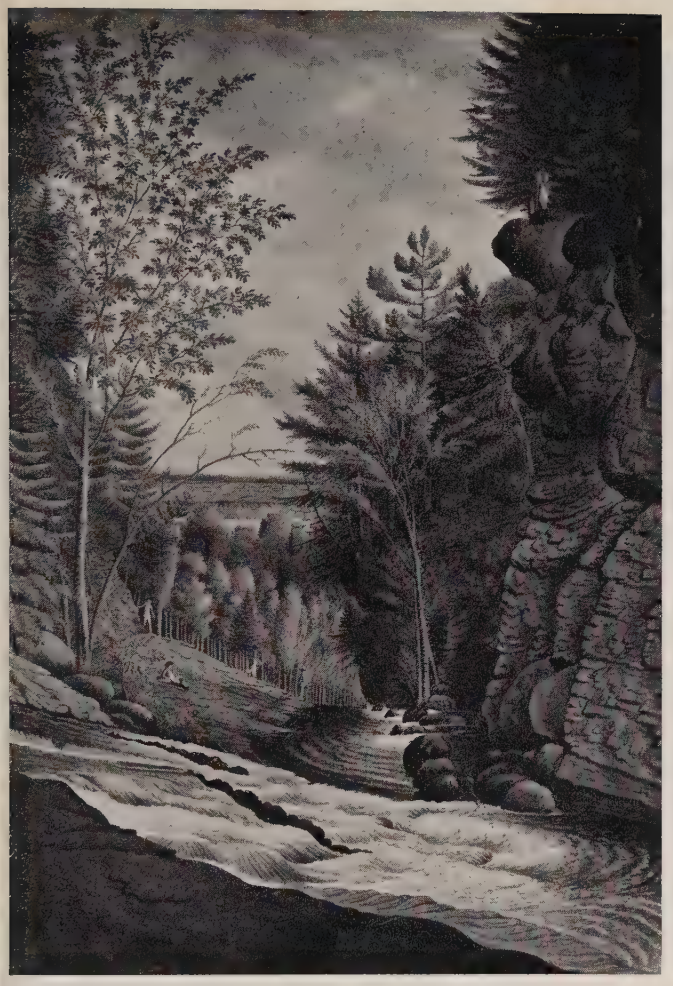
74 ANONYMOUS. *Votive of the Shipwreck at Lévis, 1754*

British North America and published a book of his travels.[9] His water colours like the *Lake St Charles* (N.G.C.) recall the classical landscapes of English artists who admired Claude Lorraine. This and the picturesque *Ruins of the Intendant's Palace, Quebec* (*c.* 1795, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto) could as easily be scenes of Italy as of Canada. Another artist was Major-General James Cockburn (1779?-1847) who travelled much about Canada painting scenery. His views such as *Niagara Falls* (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto) reveal a strong taste for picturesqueness of subject and composition.

The best known of all the breed was William Henry Bartlett (1809-

[9]Travels through the Canadas *(London, 1807).*

75 W. H. BARTLETT. *Montreal from the Ice*



76 Thomas Davies. *A View on the River la Puce near Quebec in Canada, 1782*

77 James Cockburn. *Niagara Falls*

78 George Heriot. *Lake St Charles Near Quebec*

79 François Beaucourt. *Portrait of a Negro Slave, 1786*

1854), a professional topographical artist who journeyed through various parts of the world making drawings for the engravers. Until recently he has been known to Canadians only by the plates engraved by various hands in the book *Canadian Scenery*.[10] Fortunately the style of the real Bartlett is now revealed by the original water colours which have recently been collected by the Royal Ontario Museum, such as the spacious view of *Montreal from the Ice* (*c.* 1838).* With its transparency of tone it is happily free from the stylized Turnerism of the 1842 engravings.

Topographical artists were also at work in other British colonies besides Canada. William Eagar (1796?-1839) who painted *The Celebration of Queen Victoria's Coronation on Halifax Common* (Royal Ontario Museum), a pretty costume-piece of 1838, was one of the best in the Maritime Provinces. On the other side of the continent Lieutenant Henry Warre (1819-*c.* 1898) made coloured drawings in 1845 of the Oregon country, then under dispute between Great Britain and the United States. One of these, *The Rocky Mountains* (Public Archives, Ottawa) is delicately Turneresque in style.

There were a few landscapes in oils. Some are anonymous, like the fine atmospheric *View of Fredericton* (Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton) painted in 1823 by one who signed himself simply 'M'. And from the middle of the century comes the vigorous *Yacht Race, Halifax* (1850, N.G.C.) by the marine painter John O'Brien (1832?-1891).

Portrait painting had meanwhile begun to develop under new stimuli from abroad. In the province of Quebec the first figure study in this country (as opposed to the conventional portrait) had been painted in 1786 by François Beaucourt (1740-1794) of Montreal. His *Negress* (McCord Museum, Montreal) is a unique example of 'pure' painting in which the texture of the paint, harmonies of colour, and the play of light are to be enjoyed for their own sakes. The picture carries with it an intriguing suggestion of Fragonard to remind us that Beaucourt was the first Canadian-born painter to study in Europe. He is said to have travelled as far as Russia, and his *Self-Portrait* (N.G.C.) shows him wearing a Russian–or perhaps only a Canadian–fur hat.

Another painter stood out in Lower Canada at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Baron Wilhelm von Moll Berczy (1748-1813) was a Saxon land-agent who became a builder in Toronto and Montreal and later a painter in Quebec. Several miniatures are known to be by him, including one of *Joseph Brant, the Mohawk Chief* (1797, Quebec Seminary). A canvas of the same subject is in the National Gallery of Canada. These have a cold smoothness of style that recalls the work of some German painters of the period like Wilhelm Tischbein, the painter of Goethe. The same quality is found in the figures in *The Woolsey Family* (1809, N.G.C.) with its precisely drawn Regency interior and fine view over the ramparts of Quebec. It is a rare example in Canada of the conversation piece, a type of portrait group that had been made popular in England by Hogarth and Zoffany. The picture was given to the National Gallery of Canada by Major Edgar Woolsey, a great-grandson of the James Woolsey who commis-

[10] *N. P. Willis,* Canadian Scenery, illustrated from drawings by W. H. Bartlett *(2 vol., London, 1842).*

**Pl. 75*

80 Wilhelm Von Moll Berczy
The Woolsey Family, 1809

sioned it and noted on the back of the canvas that the painter had charged him £10 per figure and thrown the dog in free.

In Upper Canada the leading portrait painter was George Theodore Berthon (1806-1892)[11] who had been a pupil of Jacques-Louis David in Paris. Berthon settled in Toronto in about 1841 and soon became the court painter of the Family Compact, the ruling clique. His *Three Robinson Sisters** (1846, coll. J.B. Robinson, Toronto), daughters of the Chief Justice, is another rare instance of the portrait group. In style it shows the Classic painter's insistence on line and plane, but it seems also to have caught an infection from the sentimental charm of the popular illustrations and fashion-plates of the day. In Kingston another pre-Confederation portrait painter was active, William Sawyer (1820-1889) who painted *Sir John A. Macdonald*† in 1864 (New Brunswick Museum, Saint John).

In spite of these exotic importations of European fashion the single portrait remained the normal thing in the colonies. In Nova Scotia the best of the early painters was Robert Field (*c.* 1760-1819).[12] He was an

81 Wilhelm von Moll Berczy. *Joseph Brant, 1797*

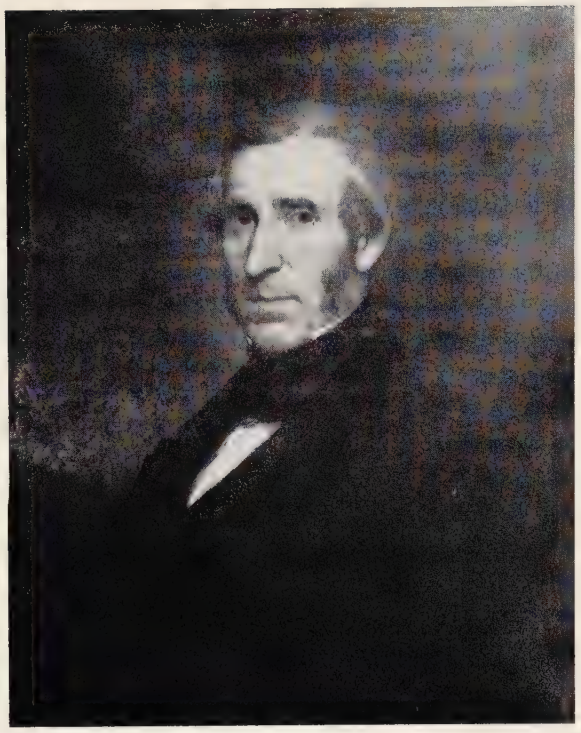
[11] *William Colgate,* George Theodore Berthon *(Toronto, 1942).*

[12] *Harry Piers,* Robert Field *(New York, 1927).*

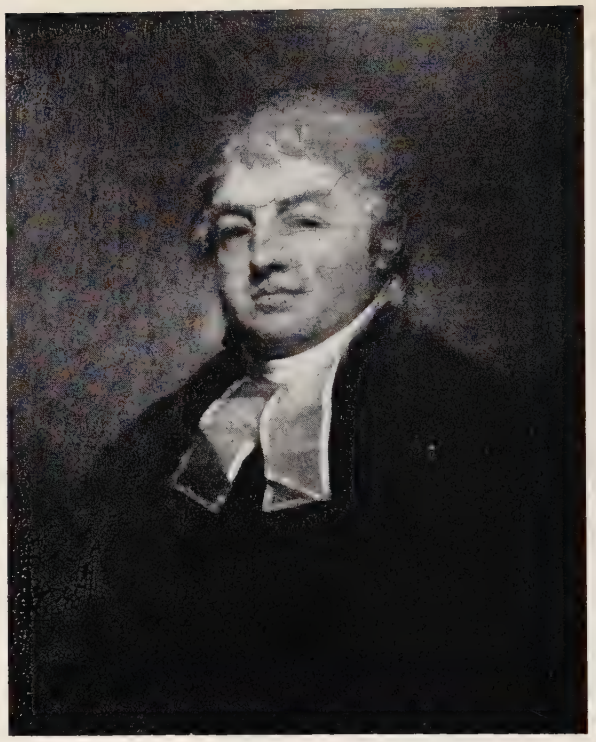
**Pl. 82*

†*Pl. 85*

82 George Theodore Berthon
The Three Robinson Sisters, 1846



83 William Valentine. *Self-portrait*



84 Robert Field. *The Rev. Archibald Gray*

English portrait artist who had worked in the United States prior to his stay in Halifax from 1808 to 1816. His miniatures of *'Major' Thomas King* and his wife *Elizabeth (Cleveland) King* (1816, coll. Mrs W. B. Almon, Halifax) and his portrait of *The Rev. Archibald Gray* (Nova Scotia Museum) are fine examples of his work in Nova Scotia. His style shows the influence of a more famous contemporary, Gilbert Stuart. Field's chief successor in Halifax was William Valentine (1798-1849)[13] in whose *Self-portrait* (*c.* 1835, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax) colonial simplicity may be seen winning out over British blandness. His frank realism made him spare nothing about his own equine features. Valentine's career illustrates the honest industry of one who began as a house painter. He once advertised his rates for portraits in a Halifax newspaper: from £1 10*s.* to £5 for profiles; £15 for kit-cats (almost half-lengths with arms); £30 for half-lengths. He later became the pioneer photographer of Halifax.

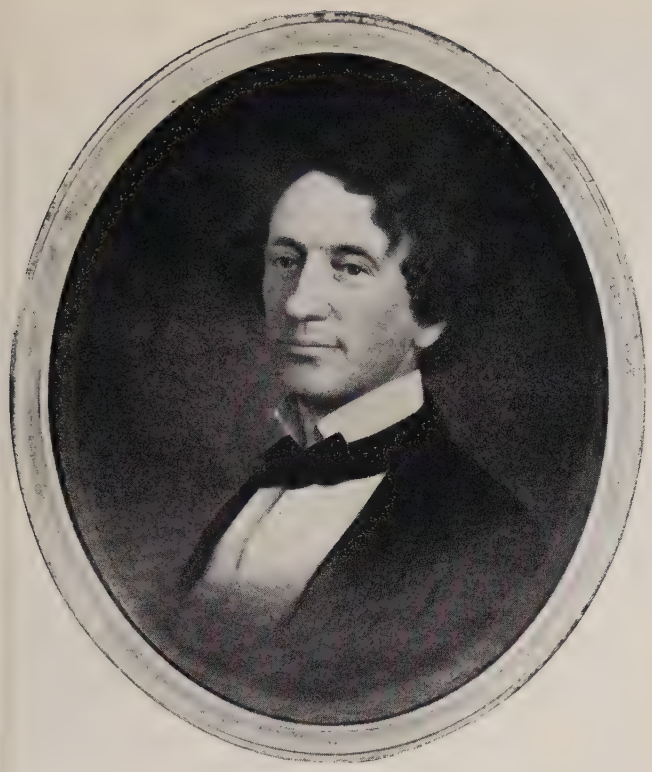
3

What makes the study of Canadian art so interesting is the fact that it is still a new field in which discoveries are constantly being made. Perhaps the most exciting of recent discoveries are the nineteenth-century 'primitives'. By these are meant the folk-painters of the sort already discussed in the French colonial period. Ever since the discovery of Henri Rousseau, the customs collector and Sunday painter, by the artists and critics of Paris about 1890 we have become more and more aware of the virtues of the good primitive. For in the work of a naturally endowed folk-artist the fundamental aesthetic qualities of line, colour, composition, and expression seem to stand out all the more for his lack of formal training. In North America a considerable number of these painters were active, many of them as itinerant artists. In Canada the main fact about them seems to be that there were so many good ones. When I had occasion to write about them recently I had good reason to call the article 'Primitives with Character'.[14]

One interesting primitive picture represents *Micmac Indians* (N.G.C.) and was presumably painted in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick about 1850. It is a picture which combines naïveté and elegance in an extraordinarily successful way. Though most paintings, like this one,

[13] *For Valentine and others in Nova Scotia see Harry Piers, 'Artists in Nova Scotia'*, Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, *xviii (Halifax, 1914), pp. 101-165.*

[14] Art Quarterly, *xx (1957), pp. 17-29).*



85 William Sawyer.
Sir John A. MacDonald, 1864

are by unknown artists, a few of the painters are known by name. Jean-Baptiste Triaud (1794-1836) for a time taught art to the pupils of the Ursuline Convent in Quebec. His *Corpus Christi Procession* (1821, Ursuline Convent, Quebec) is a novel and animated rendering of a crowd in the market place in Quebec and shows the folk-artist's concern to cover the entire canvas with a sparkling pattern.

Another is R. C. Todd, about whom nothing is known but his signature on one small picture of about 1835, *The Ice Cone, Montmorency Falls* (N.G.C.). With its elegant forms of the sleighs and the gaily coloured costumes, it is one of the most attractive examples of early Canadian painting.

A third painter is Joseph Légaré (1795-1855), a versatile man who founded the first art museum in Canada and eventually became a member of the Legislative Council. In his early days he had retouched a number of old paintings which had been sent out from France and from these he acquired a taste for European compositions. In his *Falls near Saint-Ferréol* (Quebec Museum) he seems to have borrowed the foreground from Salvator Rosa; but the rest of the picture is a primitive, though strangely excited, rendering of Canadian scenery. His originality revealed itself in his choice of subjects and their interpretation. A grisly nocturne of an Indian massacre, *The Ordeal of an Indian Woman* (Pri-

86 Anonymous. *Micmac Indians*

87 Joseph Légaré. *The Cholera Plague at Quebec*

vate coll., Quebec), is as romantic as an episode from James Fenimore Cooper and as sensational as a Victorian 'panorama'. And when he attempted the documentation of contemporary events as in *The Cholera Plague at Quebec* (*c.* 1837, N.G.C.) he invested the scene with a horror, enhanced by torchlight and a ghastly moon, that was worthy of Edgar Allan Poe.

The most numerous primitive paintings were, however, the portraits. These have been found in various regions preserved as family heirlooms. The most impressive series is one recently found in the province of Quebec, all by the same unknown hand. The National Gallery of Canada bought five members of one family, the Dions, the two finest examples of which are the *Young Man* and the *Lady with a Book* (*c.* 1837). The Quebec Museum acquired two members of another family: *Madame Poulin de Courval* and *Thomas Laing*. No folk-painter has ever handled composition, colour, and costume detail better than this or better expressed the inborn Canadian reserve of his sitters. M. Gérard Morisset

links with the foregoing portraits several others that are slightly different, among them the fine *Madame Ranvoyzé* (*c.* 1840) of Louiseville in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. He attaches a name to them, that of the itinerant painter Jean-Baptiste Roy-Audy (1778-1848). If this can be substantiated by signed examples Roy-Audy will take his place as one of Canada's best early painters.

These primitive portraits prepared the way for the contributions of the two most important painters of the early nineteenth century. Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895) and his pupil Théophile Hamel (1817-1870) were trained in Paris and brought new influences from France to bear on Canadian art.

Plamondon began as an assistant to Légaré. Later he went to France and studied with Paulin Guérin, a pupil of David. Indeed his early *Portrait of a Lady* (Private coll., Ottawa) with its chaste line, marble-like modelling, and Empire costume is scarcely distinguishable from the style of David himself. By the forties, however, he seems to have remembered the old Canadian tradition of plainness and of concentration upon character which the folk-artists had preserved in their work. In fine examples like the *Portrait of a Boy* (*c.* 1840, N.G.C.) these native characteristics are present as well as the traits of Classicism. The same stylistic combination of France and Canada—classic line and limpid colour plus straightforward likeness—is seen to good advantage in Plamondon's portrait of the nun *Sœur Saint-Alphonse* (1841, N.G.C.). One feels here that the pose, the features, and the accessories are all intensely characteristic of the person herself. One is reminded of the portraits of Ingres—an Ingres stripped of the fashionable trappings of Paris. One of Plamondon's rare figure compositions, *La Chasse aux tourtres* (1853, Art Gallery of Toronto), shows how this school re-

88 Anonymous. *Lady with a Book*

89 Antoine Plamondon. *Portrait of a Lady*

90 Antoine Plamondon. *La chasse aux tourtres, 1853*

garded landscape: they relegated it to the status of a mere backdrop behind the figures. The birds in this picture are the long-extinct passenger pigeons.

Hamel's work is known in two phases, before and after his study trip to Europe. In the former period, he exhibited Plamondon's influence though not the latter's technical achievements. Early portraits like the *Léocadie Bilodeau* (*c.* 1842, Université Laval, Quebec) are very directly concerned with the person. He painted the little girl in a simple, frontal pose that allowed full concentration upon the face. The effect is remarkably and quite accidentally like that of a child's portrait by Goya. His *Madame Panet* (1841, Quebec Museum) by the same token reminds one of the early Italians. Hamel's early *Self-portrait* (1837, Université Laval, Quebec) with its sweeping river landscape in the background sums up the romantic idealism of the thirties. One is reminded of the style of the German Idealists of the same period. A later *Self-portrait* (*c.* 1850, Quebec Museum) shows, however, the effects of his studies in Europe where the Romantics had superseded the Classics. Here one meets the involved shadows and deep colours of Géricault and Delacroix. But there remains an admirable directness of expression.

4

At the middle of the nineteenth century came the beginnings of landscape and genre painting in the romantic vein. This type of painting had been prepared for by the topographical artists and the primitives, but a whole host of new European influences now had their effect. Yet in spite of these influences certain definitely Canadian traits were present in the work of the romantic realists who were active from the forties to the seventies. These included two well known painters, Cornelius Krieghoff (1815-1872) and Paul Kane (1810-1871), and one who is more of a recent discovery, Robert Whale (1805-1887).

Krieghoff[15] is an engaging figure who in many ways was typical of his times. He is one of our few well known painters, and reactions to him are

91 Théophile Hamel. *Madame Panet*

[15] *Marius Barbeau,* Cornelius Krieghoff, Pioneer Painter of North America *(Toronto, 1934). Earlier accounts are given by G. M. Fairchild in* From my Quebec Scrapbook *(Quebec, 1907), pp. 121-127, and* Gleanings from Quebec *(Quebec, 1908), pp. 66-71. See also Marius Barbeau,* Krieghoff *(Toronto, 1962).*

fairly well defined. Some consider him the very fountain-head of the Canadian school; others repudiate him as the explorer of a country not his own and the contriver of that imaginary character the jolly *habitant*. Admittedly, by international standards he was a minor figure at best, but this wandering German worked during what was a decisive period in Canadian history and is therefore deserving of examination in some detail. Born at Düsseldorf or at Amsterdam, he probably studied at both these places and after travelling about Europe as a strolling artist and musician he came to America to make a botanical collection for a German university. He joined the United States Army in 1837 and is said to have made pictures of the Seminole War in Florida. Then he deserted, married a French Canadian girl, and settled near Montreal shortly after 1840. He remained there until 1853 when his friend John Budden, an auctioneer, encouraged him to move to Quebec. In 1862 he was on the move again, this time to Chicago where he died after a final visit (1871) to Quebec. He evidently carried on a brisk trade in scenes of Canada which he sold to British army officers and other officials stationed at Quebec. These pictures found their way to England and, now that Krieghoff prices are so high, they appear in such quantities in the London auction rooms that one can only guess at how prolific he was.

92 Théophile Hamel. *Self-portrait*

In analysing Krieghoff's style one soon realizes that he was an eclectic, drawing upon a number of period styles in European art. That he was especially familiar with the art of the Low Countries is demonstrated in *The Studio* (N.G.C.), a small canvas painted perhaps as early as 1845. It includes what is probably an idealized portrait of the artist. The room is crowded with odds and ends of costume, studio properties, casts of sculpture, and pictures of various schools including the Dutch and earlier Flemish. Another picture, *The Game of Cards* (1848, former coll. Hon. Charles Murphy, Ottawa), reflects a more specific influence. Here the card-playing, drinking, and grimacing figures were taken from paintings by David Teniers and other seventeenth-century painters of low life. The influence of the Dutch school is confirmed when one compares the *habitant* figures in *The Habitant Farm* (1856, N.G.C.) with the stocky peasants in paintings by Adriaen van Ostade and others.

Most important of all his influences, however, were the teachings of the Düsseldorf Academy which was the Mecca of the art students of the day. The effects are seen in almost every painting, but especially in larger compositions like *Merrymaking** (1860, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton). Costumes, settings, and carefully arranged lighting make the picture seem like a tableau on a little stage, with each actor frozen in some action for the benefit of the spectator. These were the special tricks of the Düsseldorf school. The scene is laid in winter outside a wayside inn to which pleasure-seekers have come from Quebec. A sleigh overturns, a man falls down the steps, more sleighs arrive, figures peer out from the hayloft—and many other things happen which would take pages to describe.

Several interesting parallels to Krieghoff are found in American painting of the same period. Eastman Johnson, a leading painter of his time, had also studied at Düsseldorf, and his *Old Kentucky Home* (1859, New York Public Library) is the same kind of little drama in which settings and action are made as picturesque as possible, though it takes place in the Old South instead of Quebec. Another parallel may be noted in connection with Krieghoff's attractive portrait of *John Budden* (*c.* 1850, coll. Mrs. R. Archibald, Montreal). It shows Krieghoff's friend with his dog taking their ease in a woodland glade. It is close in feeling to some works of the Hudson River School, such as Asher Brown Durand's *Kindred Spirits* (1849, New York Public Library) in which the figures commune with nature in a wild mountain landscape.

**Pl. 93*

93 Cornelius Krieghoff. *Merrymaking, 1860*

Krieghoff's work includes several well known categories of *habitant* and Indian subject-matter. He had no compunction about repeating the same scene many times: 'bilking the toll', crossing the ice bridge, Indian traders, and the rest. But it is important to note that while he was painting these pot-boilers he was also learning to observe the Canadian landscape. Many of his pictures represent an honest effort to portray the seasons, especially winter with its crystalline air and hard shadows. The large *Winter Landscape* (N.G.C.) of 1849 illustrates the transparency of tone, breadth of form, and luminosity of colour of which he was capable.

Some of his work was pure landscape without figures. Waterfalls always interested him. In *The Falls on the River St Anne* (1854, coll. Breakey, Quebec) the strong shapes of the rocks in the foreground took his attention, and he painted them in a broad manner that foretold the expressive forms of the Group of Seven. Perhaps the most interesting of his subjects are the rarer ones such as steamships, trains, and early industry. Examples are *Sillery Cove* (1859, coll. J.A. MacAulay, Winnipeg), *The Grand Trunk* (1858, McCord Museum, Montreal), and *The Steamship 'Quebec'* (1853, coll. Dr W.R. Franks, Toronto).

Paul Kane[16] was contemporary with Krieghoff but covered a very different sector of the Canadian scene, one which up to this time was unexplored by artists. Born in Ireland, he had come to York in Upper Canada as a boy. After a period spent in travelling through the United States and copying pictures in the galleries of Europe, he returned to Toronto with the ambitious plan of painting the great North-west. He made two trips with Hudson's Bay Company expeditions, the first (1845) as far as Lake Huron, the second (1846-8) across the Great Lakes and the prairies to the Pacific coast, always making small sketches of the country and its inhabitants. He enlarged many of these studies into canvases on his return, thus establishing a precedent for the Group

[16] *A. H. Robson,* Paul Kane *(Toronto, 1937).*

[17] *London, 1859. The Radisson Society edition (Toronto, 1925) contains an introduction by L. J. Burpee and a list of Kane's paintings.*

of Seven. Some of his pictures were reproduced in his book, *The Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America*.[17]

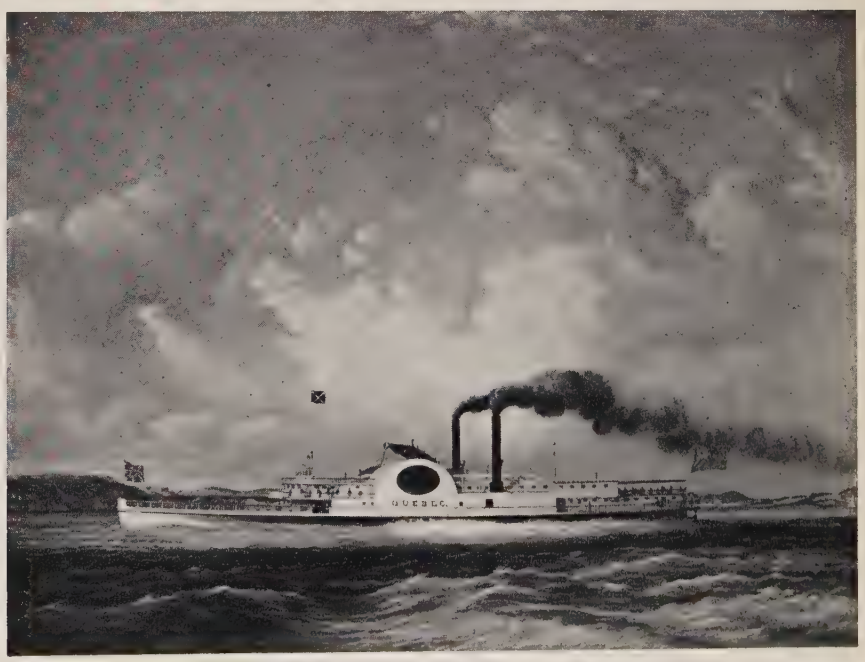
Recalling Kane's early life, one is not surprised to find that his canvases reproduce the brownish tones of old master paintings. Dark museum varnish seems to have cast a spell over him and prevented him from seeing the Canadian landscape in its true colours. This is seen in *Blackfoot Chief and Subordinates* (N.G.C.), a picture which also gives proof of his eclecticism. The formal composition and the rhetorical gestures of the figures recall those of the greatest eclectic painter of all, Benjamin West, who borrowed from Raphael and all the old masters. Kane's various scenes showing Indians on horseback (*Assiniboines Hunting Buffalo,* N.G.C.) resemble some American buffalo-hunting pictures. They also speak of the influence of the seventeenth-century Flemish and Dutch masters and perhaps also of Géricault and Delacroix. It is amusing to see that Kane's Indian portraits (*Blackfoot Chief,* Montreal Museum of Fine Arts)*, for all the accuracy of their costumes, reproduce the haughty poses and expressions of the aristocratic sitters of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

But Kane's pictures are extremely valuable records of their time. *Scalp Dance by Spokane Indians* (N.G.C.) has a stiff composition but it is made highly dramatic by the moon and the fierce play of fire-light. Landscapes like *Fort Garry and St Boniface* (N.G.C.) are interesting for their subjects even if a foreground imitated from Gainsborough tends to distract the eye from the real subject-matter in the background.

The third important painter active at the middle of the century was Robert Whale. Born in England, he came to Brantford in Upper Canada at an early age. In 1853 he painted a *View of Hamilton* (N.G.C.)† that has such breadth and richness as to recall Richard Wilson or David Cox. An idealized *Landscape with Figures* (N.G.C.) is peopled with shivering wood nymphs—a treatment of the Canadian scene which was never

94 Paul Kane. *Assiniboines Hunting Buffalo*

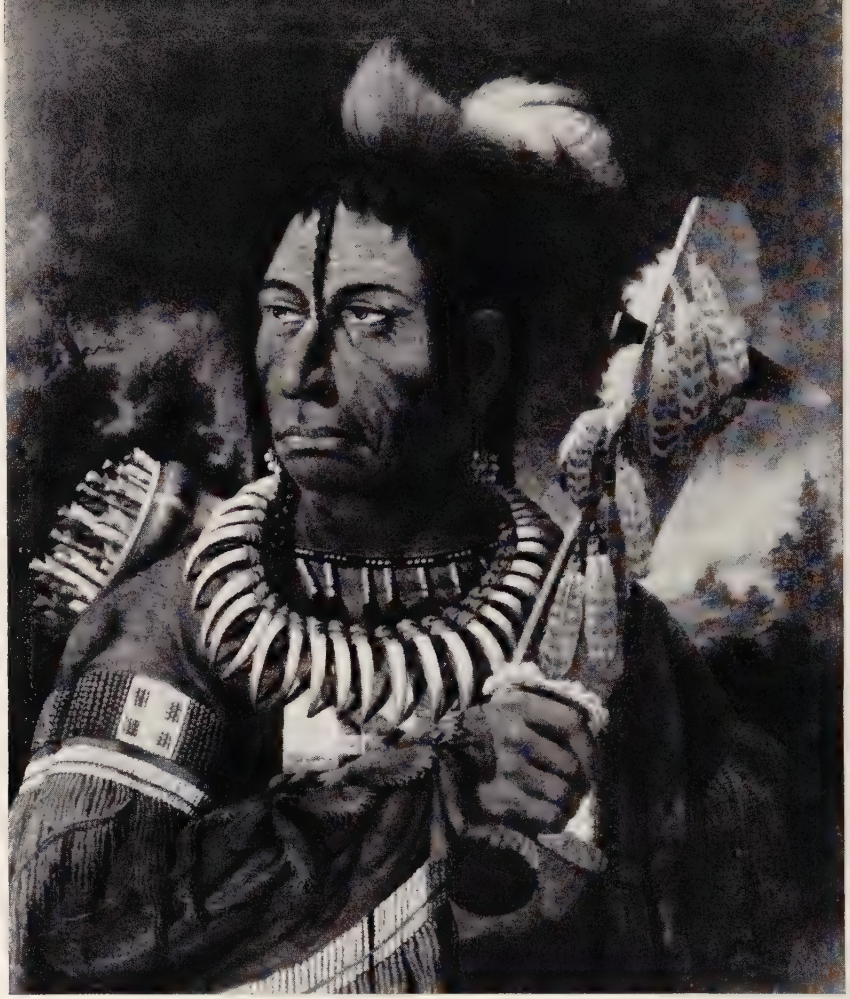
95 Cornelius Krieghoff. *The Falls on the River St Anne, 1854*



96 Cornelius Krieghoff. *The Steamship 'Quebec', 1853*

*Pl. 98 †Pl. 100

97 Daniel Fowler. *A Woodland Wanderer, 1888*



98 Paul Kane. *Blackfoot Chief*

99 Paul Kane. *Fort Garry and St Boniface*

100 Robert Whale. *View of Hamilton, 1853*

to be repeated! Later he painted *Niagara Falls* (*c.* 1870, N.G.C.) for the old Canada Southern Railway. By this time his style had become a curious blend of accomplishment and folk-art.

5

In the later nineteenth century, beginning in the sixties, objective realism replaced romanticism in painting. The romantic imagination which had coloured the art of Kane and Krieghoff was superseded by a sober, analytical study of things and people. The English speciality of landscape in painting again came to the fore in Canada and excluded almost all other forms of art. Most painters of the Confederation period were English Canadians, though some were born abroad.

Among the latter was a German-Jewish painter William Raphael (1833-1914) whose important canvas of 1866, *Immigrants at Montreal** (N.G.C.) has recently come to light. Raphael himself was an immigrant and could pack his picture full of realistic and authentic detail. But it is of aesthetic importance as well because of the solid arrangement of the masses of the Bonsecours church and other buildings and the assortment of bright colours. Another recent discovery is James Griffiths (1825-1896), a flower painter and early academician. Drawings such as *A Vase of Flowers* (N.G.C.) are almost seventeenth-century Dutch in their fullness of colour and composition. Daniel Fowler (1810-1894) was another water colour painter and is usually known for his still life of dead game. But his *Woodland Wanderer* (1888, N.G.C.) is a land-

**Pl. 101*

101 William Raphael. *Immigrants at Montreal, 1866*

scape of almost Cézanne-like sturdiness of composition, with a lonely figure to give it a touch of colour and poignancy.

Fowler serves to turn attention to the main subject-matter of the period, landscape. An old-fashioned romantic aura lingers over the work of some painters of the Confederation period like Allan Edson (1846-1888). His *Mount Orford and the Owl's Head* (1870, N.G.C.) is pervaded by a poetic feeling of loneliness that makes it resemble the work of the Hudson River School. And yet this landscape is a minutely detailed work denoting a most careful observation of nature.

With Henry Sandham (1842-1910), a painter who worked for Notman the photographer in Montreal before he became an illustrator in Boston, the factual side of landscape won out decisively. In his *Hunters Returning with their Spoil* (1877, N.G.C.)* the facts seem to crowd out the essential qualities of picture-making: design, colour, and the rest.

**Pl. 104*

102 John A. Fraser. *Lake Scugog, 1873*

103 Allan Edson. *Mount Orford and the Owl's Head from Lake Memphremagog, 1870*

104 Henry Sandham. *Hunters Returning with their Spoil, 1877*

105 John A. Fraser. *The Rogers Pass, 1886*

106 Lucius R. O'Brien. *British Columbia Forest, 1888*

A painting is now as exact as a coloured photograph. One can well understand how the reason for this kind of painting disappeared with the development of the camera and a change in style became necessary by the end of the century.

There were, however, painters at the end of the century who had more to offer than mere photographic realism. One was John A. Fraser (1838-1898) who also worked for Notman, colouring and retouching photographs, and painting in his spare time. It is no wonder that such an artist as Fraser was a realist; the wonder is that he had so personal a vision. Until recently he was known by a few rather ambitious canvases of the Rockies, painted in the eighties (*The Rogers Pass,* 1886, N.G.C.). But a picture of 1876 has been found which considerably raises his artistic reputation. *Lake Scugog* (N.G.C.)* has a fine Brueghelesque subject, hunters at sunset, and shows an almost Brueghel-like power of evoking mood.

Another painter was Lucius R. O'Brien (1832-1899), the art editor of Principal Grant's monumental work, *Picturesque Canada.*[18] This book includes a wood-engraving after O'Brien's canvas *Kakabeka Falls* (1882, N.G.C.). It gives full evidence that this engineer-turned-artist was aware of the geographical and geological features of the terrain: the rock structure, the contours of the land, the kinds of timber. It was almost as if he were compiling a document that would be valuable to those interested in the economic development of the Lakehead district. Yet closer examination reveals a picture-pattern of simplicity and monumental strength that is characteristic of the art of the eighties. O'Brien's water colour *British Columbian Forest* (1888, N.G.C.) has this same compositional strength and the added virtue of being imbued with a feeling of the vitality of nature on the West Coast that makes it in some sense a prophecy of Emily Carr.

107 Lucius R. O'Brien. *Kakabeka Falls, 1882*

[18] *G. M. Grant,* Picturesque Canada *(2 vol., Toronto, 1882).*

**Pl. 102*

ART AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY[1]

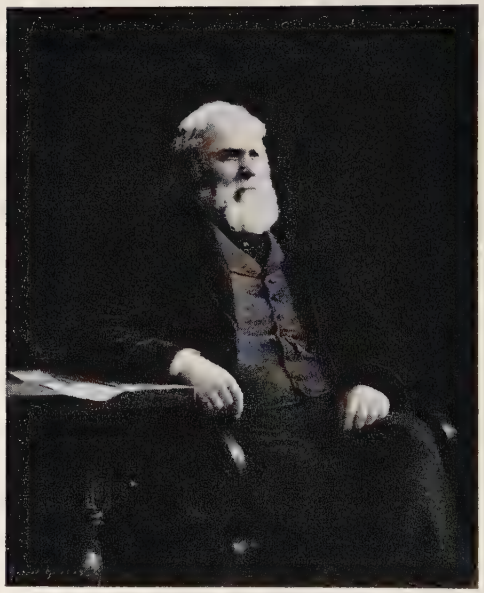
1

The Canada of today began to develop in the years around Confederation. The growth of preceding decades was crowned by the birth of the New Dominion in 1867. Canada's rate of expansion in the nineteenth century was such that in spite of recurrent economic depressions and losses of population to the United States several towns began to assume the status of cities. In these were established art societies and art schools. A few such organizations had been fitfully active since the forties, but in Montreal the Art Association (1860)[2] and the short-lived Society of Canadian Artists (1867) and in Toronto the Ontario Society of Artists (1872) and the Central Ontario School of Art (1876)[3] marked the graduation of art to a higher plane than it had occupied in the period when most artists were amateurs or itinerant folk painters. The annual exhibitions of these new groups showed a steady increase in the number of professional artists resident in Canada.

The climax of this activity came in 1880 with the simultaneous founding of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts[4] and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.[5] The Academy, it is important to note, did not represent a body of conservative opinion such as in Europe sought to stifle all forward movements. Rather it included almost all the artists in the country, both old and young, and was dedicated to the fostering of art on a national scale. Academy and Gallery owed their inauguration to the Governor-General of the day, the Marquess of Lorne, and his wife Princess Louise. The latter was a daughter of Queen Victoria and an artist in her own right. At the instigation of a group of artists led by Lucius R. O'Brien these influential patrons convoked the new academicians in November 1880, and this in the face of objections by some who thought the move premature by as much as a century. The first exhibition was held in Ottawa and from it a group of works was chosen to form the nucleus of the National Gallery.

Thus art became a recognized national activity. This development was probably encouraged by the special character of the times. In general they were a period of relative calm amid the rush of events in the nineteenth century. Optimistic North America was temporarily sobered by the American Civil War and was able to halt briefly to consider the present and take thought for the future. Reference has already been made to the utilitarian realism of O'Brien's painting *Kakabeka Falls* (1882, N.G.C.) and to its rugged strength of composition. This combination of realism and strength was characteristic of the art of the eighties.

The most typical painter of the period was Robert Harris (1849-1919), a foundation member and later president of the Academy. Born



108 ROBERT HARRIS. *Sir Hugh Allan*

in Wales, he had come as a child to Prince Edward Island, and after studying in Paris and London he settled down to a long teaching career in Montreal. His quiet and painstaking examination of the facts is evident in paintings like the *Sir Hugh Allan* (*c.* 1880, N.G.C.), the extremely literal portrait of the founder of a steamship line and promoter of the Canadian Pacific Railway, a man himself accustomed to come to grips with the facts. Such a picture is not only to be explained in terms of Harris's study under one of the most stringent European realists, Léon Bonnat of Paris, but also of his desire to grapple with the realities of his

[1] *See in addition to the general references (page 17):* The Year Book of Canadian Art *(Toronto, 1913); Gérard Morisset,* Peintres et tableaux, op. cit.

[2] *Now the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.*

[3] *Now the Ontario College of Art.*

[4] *Hugh G. Jones,* History of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts *(MS., 1934).*

[5] *See R. H. Hubbard,* European Paintings in Canadian Collections *(Toronto, 1956), pp. xix-xxii;* idem., Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture, The National Gallery of Canada *(3 vol., Ottawa and Toronto, 1957-9).*

109 Robert Harris. *Study for 'The Fathers of Confederation'*, *1883*

110 Robert Harris. *Two Studies for 'The Fathers of Confederation'*, *1883*

own society. The change is significant from the atmosphere of gentle romance that surrounded portraits such as Krieghoff's *John Budden* in the fifties. Allan sits in his chair as if ready to return to big business the next moment. Costume too has lost its picturesqueness and become dark and respectable. 'Stoutness' has now replaced the willowiness of the fifties as an ideal quality of manhood. The pragmatism of the eighties made a deep impression on the Canadian character and with it went a seriousness of purpose and a profound belief in progress.

In 1883 Harris received the largest commission hitherto awarded a Canadian painter. This was the large mural painting *The Fathers of Confederation* for the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. His preparations were characteristically thorough. At an early stage he made a series of small water colour sketches* in which he tested several compositional arrangements. It may well be felt that either of the two studies in the Harris Memorial Gallery at Charlottetown would have made a more interesting finished picture. But he discarded the elegance of the one and the decorative grouping of the other in favour of a simple, balanced arrangement of the figures. The finished canvas was lost in the fire of 1916 but its appearance is preserved in photographs and a full-size cartoon. The perfunctory composition† which he adopted allowed him to include an adequate portrait of each founding father; and he had prepared portrait studies of all the delegates to the Quebec Conference. Even in his own day Harris was criticized for making the picture too detailed, but in doing so he was adhering to the tradition of simple directness that had been established in colonial times.

Yet Harris valued certain aesthetic qualities as well as naturalism. A strong picture pattern is noticeable in *A Meeting of School Trustees* (1886, N.G.C.) which portrays an incident in a country school where a young teacher pleads her cause before a group of hard-bitten farmers. The canvas is blocked out in a clear scheme of rectangular forms. In building sturdy constructions such as this Harris was participating in an international artistic movement which had arisen in reaction to the formlessness of mid-Victorian painting, a movement which included figures of no less stature than Degas and Cézanne in France and Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins in the United States. In one very small picture, *Harmony* (*c.* 1879, N.G.C.), which has only recently come to light and which he exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, he set the single figure of a young woman against a plain, quiet background. The same use of an expressive *leitmotiv* against an ordered background is characteristic of Eakins' best pictures, such as *Lady with a Setter Dog* (1885, Metropolitan Museum, New York). Both paintings are full of the flavour of their times.

111 Robert Harris. *Harmony*

The paintings of Robert Harris have the brownish coloration that pervaded the work of a whole generation of artists from 1875 to 1895. It was partly this that caused Lewis Mumford to call the period 'The Brown Decades'.[6] He was thinking not only of painting but of architecture as well. The cities of the period, as seen in photographs, were dominated by large brown or red sandstone buildings with round arches and heavy masonry. These features owed their origin to the Romanesque

[6] *Lewis Mumford,* The Brown Decades, a Study of the Arts in America, 1865-1895 *(New York, 1931).*

**Pl. 110*

†*Cf. Pl. 109*

Revival introduced by the American architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Richardson's famous Trinity Church, Boston (1873) embodied his theory that this massive early style from medieval Europe was well suited to the needs of the sturdy young society of North America. From Boston the style radiated to all parts of the continent and is met with in Canadian buildings like Victoria College, Toronto (1891) by William George Storm (1826-1892), with its stout tower, heavy gables, squat arches, rough stonework, and blocks of incised carving. The most noteworthy feature of such buildings was not their beauty of detail but a feeling for mass and structure in contrast with the flimsiness and formlessness of Gothic Revival buildings. A comparison with the papery Trinity College, Toronto (1851) makes the difference clear.

Just as the paintings of Robert Harris had united strong composition and realism of portrayal, the buildings of the eighties met the requirements of both construction and function. This is to be seen especially in that most typical and successful product of the age, the office block. The Board of Trade, Toronto (1889, James and James, Buffalo) has the big windows and simple formal articulation of Richardson's Pray Building in Boston. The houses of the period (Barnet Rosamund house, Almonte, Ontario, *c.* 1885) also presented an appearance of solid strength that arose from the simple massing of the forms and the use of rugged local materials. They were unpretentious, functional in their elimination of all unnecessary trimmings, and sober in their autumnal colours. The most characteristic coloration was 'a warm russet brown touched off by a lichen green and the red of red oak leaves' (Mumford).

112 W. G. Storm. *Victoria College, Toronto, 1891*

113 *Barnet Rosamund house, Almonte, Ontario*

2

During the last years of the nineteenth century a noticeable change came over Canadian art. This came in response to a universal movement in western art towards richness and elaboration. In the English-speaking countries it took the form of an Edwardian reaction to the restraints of the Victorian period and of a turning towards cosmopolitanism. Architecture, painting, sculpture, literature, and costume at the turn of the century all reflected the growing taste for elegance and refinement. Though Canada could not hope to hold out against a movement which swept Europe and the United States, the new stylishness sat ill upon so young a country. The *fin de siècle* conception of the artist as a person set apart from the rest of society by his sensibilities or bohemian way of life did much harm to his reputation in the newer countries, and later generations of North American artists were to be strongly affected by their desire to refute the legend of their effeteness.

All the architects of the period aspired to study at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris or at schools in London or New York that upheld the Parisian ideal of elegance. The academic theory of architecture which they learned at these places has remained in force almost to the present day in Canada. It demanded a knowledge of various styles of the past and their application to new buildings according to their respective functions. Thus for example the classical Greek and Roman became the canonical forms for railway stations and banks, and the Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic for churches. It is interesting to see these architects searching their history books for styles which would be suitable for Canada. They found one or two. They chose the rugged Scottish castle as the style for the ministries of government at Ottawa (National Museum of Canada, 1908), perhaps with a view to lending them an air of stability and economy. The châteaux of the Loire were imitated in railway hotels throughout the country.[7] The smooth stonework and fairy-tale towers of such buildings as the Château Laurier, Ottawa

[7] *The 'château style' was invented by an American architect, Bruce Price of Boston, who designed the Château Frontenac, Quebec, for the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1889.*

114 *The National Museum, Ottawa, 1908*

115 E. and W. S. MAXWELL. *Legislative Building, Regina, 1910*

(1910, D. H. MacFarlane, 1874-1949) were meant to induce in the beholder a feeling of gracious old-world hospitality. Another kind of Gothic, the English Perpendicular, was the favourite of the universities (Great Hall, Hart House, University of Toronto, 1914, Henry Sproatt, 1866-1934) which hoped thereby to capture the atmosphere of Oxford and Cambridge. The half-timbered cottage inspired the design of many private houses. A few roadside inns (Royal Oak Inn, Saanich, Vancouver Island) managed also to look like 'a bit of old England'.

Continuing the cavalcade of styles, the architects who designed office buildings looked to the Italian Renaissance palace, and the results were sometimes odd, particularly if the building were a skyscraper and the cornice had to be an enormous affair. A few made forays into the Baroque, as did F. M. Rattenbury in the Legislative Building at Victoria (1894) with its almost Hindu profusion of ornament. But the Georgian in its various forms was generally considered safer. The dignified Palladian was used for legislative buildings such as those at Regina (1910, Edward and W. S. Maxwell) and the refined Adam for insurance offices and the like (Mutual Life Building, Waterloo, Ontario, 1912, John A. Pearson).

Domestic building also favoured the Georgian. Most houses then as now were built without benefit of architect, and the results were pic-

116 *Drawing-room, Hugh MacDonald house, Toronto, 1908*

117 D. H. MACFARLANE. *Château Laurier, Ottawa, 1910*

118 John A. Pearson. *Mutual Life Insurance Company, Waterloo, Ontario, 1912*

turesque accretions of gables, bays, and white-painted columned porches. Such houses are still common in our streets. On the interiors (*e.g.* the Hugh MacDonald house, Toronto, 1908) the taste for richness was indulged as far as the owner's wealth allowed. Parlours were elegant with Regency arches and mouldings, French mirrors and draperies, furniture from various sources, and *objets d'art* so thickly strewn about that to walk across a room must have been hazardous. Some houses, particularly in Toronto, were given a certain architectural interest by architects influenced by Voysey and Norman Shaw, the English architects who handled period styles with grace and freedom. The restrained picturesqueness of such houses results from slight distortions in the design of roofs, windows, and doorways and from the admixture of a certain amount of the curvilinear detail of *Art Nouveau* design.

The sculpture of the period also bore out the Edwardian ideal of elegance. The first significant academic sculptor in Canada was Philippe Hébert (1850-1917). His early sculptures for the façade of the Quebec Legislature included several bronze Indians which exhibit his mastery

119 Sproat and Rolph. *Great Hall, Hart House, University of Toronto, 1914*

120 Louis-Philippe Hébert. *Queen Victoria Monument, Ottawa, 1901*

of a smooth Praxitelean beauty (*Pêcheur à la nigogue,* 1889). His many monuments such as the *Queen Victoria* (1901) on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, reflect the grandiloquence of style which he had learned in Paris. The attendant allegorical figures on these monuments and those of his contemporaries usually included a personification of Canada as a grateful young person looking up at the statesman from the base; an example is the young woman on the *Thomas D'Arcy McGee Monument,* Ottawa (*c.* 1914) by George William Hill (1861-1934). In these works it is apparent that the heaviness of the art of the eighties had been repudiated in favour of svelteness, and sober realism for elegance.

The new features of style were not slow to appear in painting. They are most noticeable in the work of those painters who escaped Canada to seek a more congenial environment in Europe. The large canvases of a typical expatriate, William Blair Bruce (1859-1906), are examples of the ambitious but vague mythologies that filled the Salons of Paris at the turn of the century. Anything further from the Canadian tradition of factualism can hardly be imagined than a work like *La joie des Néréïdes* (*c.* 1890, N.G.C.). And on the one occasion when this Hamilton painter living in Paris attempted a Canadian subject, he could not bear to paint it from nature. He chose instead to illustrate the ballad by C. D. Shanley, 'The Walker of the Snow'. The painting is in the Art Gallery of Hamilton. A trapper sings of

> The blight of the Shadow-hunter
> Who walks the midnight snow.
> . . .
> Not far into the valley
> Had I dipped upon my way,
> When a dusky figure joined me,
> In a capuchon of grey,
> . . .
> Then the fear-chill gathered in me
> Like a shroud around me cast,
> As I sank upon the snowdrift
> Where the Shadow-hunter passed.

Another willing exile was Paul Peel (1860-1892) who was born at London, Ontario, studied in Paris, and spent most of his short life in France. True to his academic training he painted conventional figure-pieces such as *A Venetian Bather* (1889, N.G.C.). His mastery of drawing, richness of colour, and satiny slickness of his modelling were perfectly attuned to the popular tastes of his time. Sophistication speaks in

121 William Blair Bruce. *The Walker of the Snow*

every stroke of *The Painter* (*c.* 1890, N.G.C.) which is probably an idealized self-portrait. The velvet smock, the ballet pose, the willowiness of limb are typical of one rather unfortunate ideal of the artist in the 'Yellow Nineties'. Peel would scarcely have dared to be so 'aesthetic' at home.

Yet these same qualities were by no means absent from the work of the painters who did stay at home. Everywhere a richer music was demanded of the artist. It is found in a typical mural painting of the period, *Le premier parlement canadien,* executed in 1913 by Charles Huot (1855-1930) for the Quebec Legislature. Huot gave his picture a dignified setting, colourful costumes, and an elaborate concentric composition—features which made Harris' *Fathers of Confederation* seem plain and stodgy by comparison. The scope of painting in Canada was extended to include new subjects taken from various sources, especially from literature, or in the case of Henri Julien (1850-1908)[8] from folklore (*La Chasse-galerie,* 1906, Quebec Museum).

The foregoing are but the typical painters of their period. It is interesting to see how the leaders of their generation adjusted themselves to the demands of a new international style that was rich in form and poetic in content. A few shifted easily to the new set of standards; others who were more deeply rooted in the honest naturalism of the eighties hesitated between the two. Among the latter was Frederick Bell-Smith (1846-1923). In 1894 he painted a large picture *Lights of a City Street* (Robert Simpson Company Ltd., Toronto) in the sober brownish style

[8] *Marius Barbeau,* Henri Julien *(Toronto, 1941).*

122 Henri Julien. *La Chasse-galerie, 1906*

123 Frederick Bell-Smith. *Sunny Sandown, Isle of Wight*

124 Paul Peel. *A Venetian Bather, 1889*

125 Frederick Bell-Smith
The Artist Painting Queen Victoria, 1895

of the eighties. It is a view of the corner of King and Yonge streets in Toronto and a picture of great honesty and (now) of considerable nostalgic feeling. Then he went to England where he obtained sittings from Queen Victoria in connection with a series of historical pictures he was painting of the death of the Canadian prime minister Sir John Thompson at Windsor. He portrayed the Queen in the reticent Canadian manner (*The Artist Painting Queen Victoria,* 1895, N.G.C.). A fine sparkling sketch, *Sunny Sandown* (*c.* 1896, N.G.C.) shows that he also became conscious of light and colour in nature. But to feel the full im-

126 Ozias Leduc. *Les trois pommes, 1887*

127 Ozias Leduc. *Study for 'The Immaculate Conception'*

pact of what Europe did to his style one must turn to his late works. *Mists and Glaciers of the Selkirks* (1911, N.G.C.) is a delicate symphony of misty colours, in which the solid forms of the mountains are almost lost. It is surprising to think that Bell-Smith was attempting the subject that John A. Fraser had painted so solidly in *The Rogers Pass* of 1886.

A better artist than Bell-Smith was Ozias Leduc (1864-1955), though he is virtually a new discovery among Canadian painters. Leduc lived most of his life in semi-retirement at Saint-Hilaire near Montreal. He seldom exhibited, and it was only at his memorial exhibition in 1955[9] that his work in the eighties and nineties became known. *Les trois pommes* (1887, coll. Mme Paul-Émile Borduas) is a tiny canvas with a monumental conception. It has something of the solemn stillness of a Georges de la Tour. The quiet, sensitive portraits of the earlier period (*Madame Lebrun,* 1899, coll. Paul Gouin, Montreal) perfectly bear out the Canadian tradition of modesty and lifelikeness. Yet after his belated trip to Paris in 1897, during which he came under the influence

[9]Ozias Leduc, 1864-1955. *The National Gallery of Canada, Le Musée de la Province de Québec, 1955-6 (exhibition catalogue).*

of the religious painter Maurice Denis, he shifted to a style that verged on sentimentality. This is seen in a few easel-paintings and in examples of his many church decorations such as the *Immaculate Conception* in the Archevêché, Sherbrooke (a drawing for which is in the National Gallery of Canada). That he avoided an excess of softness was probably due to the operation of the old tradition of restraint and sincerity in art. The late landscapes (*Paysage,* coll. Maurice Corbeil, Montreal) in spite of their elegaic mood do not sacrifice their solidity of form and simplicity of composition.

Homer Watson (1855-1936)[10] was a more widely known painter of the period. He began in the eighties with a series of admirably realistic landscapes of his native valley in southern Ontario. One strongly composed picture *On the Grand River at Doon* (*c.* 1882, N.G.C.) gives the impression of springing from the soil itself—though this earlier manner was influenced, during Watson's stay in New York, by the Hudson River School and by George Inness in particular. Another fine landscape is his Royal Canadian Academy diploma painting, *The Laurentides* (1882, N.G.C.), a spacious composition painted in a chord of blues and greens and very expressive of the character of these sombre, majestic hills.

This strong early style began to break down in the later eighties. In trying his best to live up to a chance remark by Oscar Wilde, who visited Toronto in 1882 and called him 'the Canadian Constable', Watson went to England and imitated the heavy impasto, the grand compositions, and deep-felt poetry of Constable. Thus the canvases of his middle period, such as *The Flood Gate* (1900, N.G.C.)*, represent an attempt to impose an English richness on a landscape still ragged from the pioneer's axe. The worked-over surfaces and opaque colours of such pictures prove that he was not equal to the task he had set himself. In later life he seems to have tried to imitate the Group of Seven. An endeavour to keep up with the times is seldom consistent with artistic integrity.

The tension between Canadianism and Europeanism caused little trouble for Watson's more famous contemporary Horatio Walker

128 Horatio Walker
Corner of Pig Lane, Quebec, 1884

129 Homer Watson. *The Laurentides, 1882*

[10] *Muriel Miner,* Homer Watson *(Toronto, 1938).*

* *Pl. 130*

130 Homer Watson. *The Flood Gate, 1900*

(1858-1938).[11] From the start Walker sought richness and poesy in his art. He made a great success in the United States by bowing to the fashion of the day and meeting the Europeans on their own ground. After periods spent in New York and in Europe he settled down on the Île d'Orléans to paint the farm folk and their animals over a period of forty years. He made a speciality of these subjects for much the same reason as the architects adopted the 'château' style: they sold extremely well.

An early water colour by Walker, *The Corner of Pig Lane, Quebec** (1884, Quebec Museum) illustrates his cultivation of the style of Corot. The quiet mood and evening illumination are there; even the tall narrow shape of the picture is that of Corot and Millet. His mature style is

[11] *F. Newlin Price,* Horatio Walker *(New York and Montreal, 1928).*

**Pl. 128*

131 Horatio Walker. *Oxen Drinking, 1899*

represented by the richly textured *Oxen Drinking* (1899, N.G.C.) which recalls the peasant subjects and glowing evening skies of another French painter of the Barbizon school, Constant Troyon. An American critic[12] of Walker's time suggested that he actually 'out-Barbizoned' Barbizon by exaggerating the contrasts of light and shade and the humbleness of the peasant figures. Walker's pictures are literally heavy with the poetry of toil. Millet's subjects and humanitarian feeling are also present in pictures like *Feeding the Turkeys* (1904, coll. H. S. Rubens).

Walker's sense of drama grew over the years, reaching a climax in *The Royal Mail over the Ice Bridge* (1914, coll. R.S. Waldie, Toronto). This picture is a *tour de force* of unusual effects of light, rich colours, and eloquent patterns of composition. In these respects he approximated the style of the American painter Albert Ryder, though he lacked Ryder's depth of poetic feeling.

William Brymner (1855-1925) of Montreal also practised the rich style from the beginning. Landscapes such as *Early Moonrise in September* (1899, N.G.C.) were painted in curiously soft and gliding tones and remind one of the late, Swedenborgian phase of George Inness. Here was no mere record of trees and sheep but a masterful generalization of the whole scene by means of the flowing brushstroke. Foremost in such paintings was the expression of a mood: here it is the muted richness of an autumn evening. One would guess that Brymner held a philosophy similar to Inness's Swedenborgianism with its belief in the divine indwelling in nature. But Brymner's figure studies are different. They are probably the finest of their genre since Plamondon and Hamel. Their intimacy and simplicity are well illustrated in *Girl Sewing* (*c.* 1900, Montreal Museum), a luminous study which indicates a fairly early influence from the French Impressionists.

132 William Brymner. *Early Moonrise in September, 1899*

[12] *Isham and Cortissoz,* The History of American Painting *(New York, 1927), pp. 495-6.*

133 MAURICE CULLEN. *The Old Ferry, Louise Basin, Quebec*

134 AURÈLE DE FOY SUZOR-CÔTÉ. *Settlement on the Hill-side, 1909*

Impressionism, which climaxed the entire development of European painting since the Renaissance, was introduced by Whistler, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and others in Paris in the sixties. So great was the cultural lag in Canada at the time that it reached us only slightly before 1900. It first appeared in the work of several Canadian painters who had been trained in Paris.

One was Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Côté (1869-1937). He employed the light-filled manner of Monet and Pissarro somewhat more literally than his contemporaries. The small touches of pure colour, so characteristic of the Impressionists, are found in *Youth and Sunlight* (1913), a picture which could easily have been painted by a European artist. Here is the typical Impressionist use of Japanese composition, whereby the figure of

135 Ernest Lawson. *Winter*

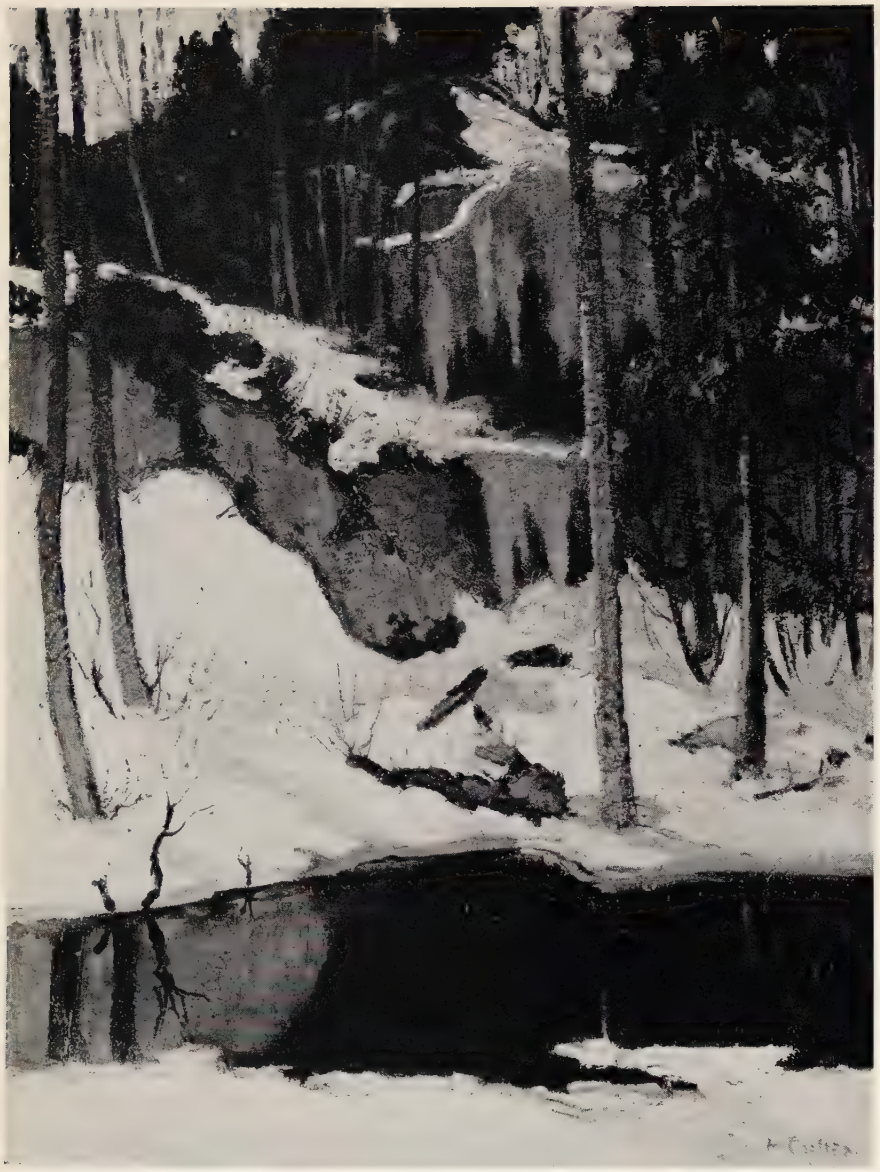
136 Maurice Cullen. *The Mill Stream, Moret*

the girl is seen from an unusual angle and is silhouetted in a decorative way against a flat background. Suzor-Côté painted the Canadian landscape in a style which closely followed that of Monet. The winter landscape in particular he conceived of as a display of atmospheric effects. Thus in spite of its very Canadian subject, *Settlement on the Hill-side* (1909, N.G.C.) is a very European picture, lacking in the crispness and clarity that even Krieghoff had recognized in our scenery. Suzor-Côté was also a sculptor and demonstrated his dependence on Europe in rather a shocking way in *Caughnawaga Women* (*c.* 1924, N.G.C.), a bronze directly inspired by a group, *Dutch Women* by the Swedish sculptor Carl Milles.[13]

Maurice Cullen (1866-1934)[14] began in the style of the French Impressionists. His earliest canvases (*Mill Stream, Moret, c.* 1895, N.G.C.) were painted in the same vicinity and in the same style as those of Sisley. He was a more sensitive painter than Suzor-Côté. The atmospheric scenes of Montreal and Quebec which he painted just after his return from France, such as *Old Houses, Montreal* (*c.* 1907, Montreal Museum), are among the best works in all Canadian painting. In them admittedly he achieved a rather European result by painting snowstorms and other special effect. But he was breaking new ground by choosing ordinary, everyday subjects as Robert Henri and the 'Ashcan School' were doing at the same time in New York. Especially good are Cullen's harbour scenes like *The Old Ferry* (1907, N.G.C.) with its admirable unity of composition, tone, and colour. In 1913 *The Ice*

[13] *Reproduced in* Studio, *1 (1910), p. 211.*

[14] Maurice Cullen, 1866-1934. *The Art Gallery of Hamilton, &c., 1956 (Exhibition catalogue).*



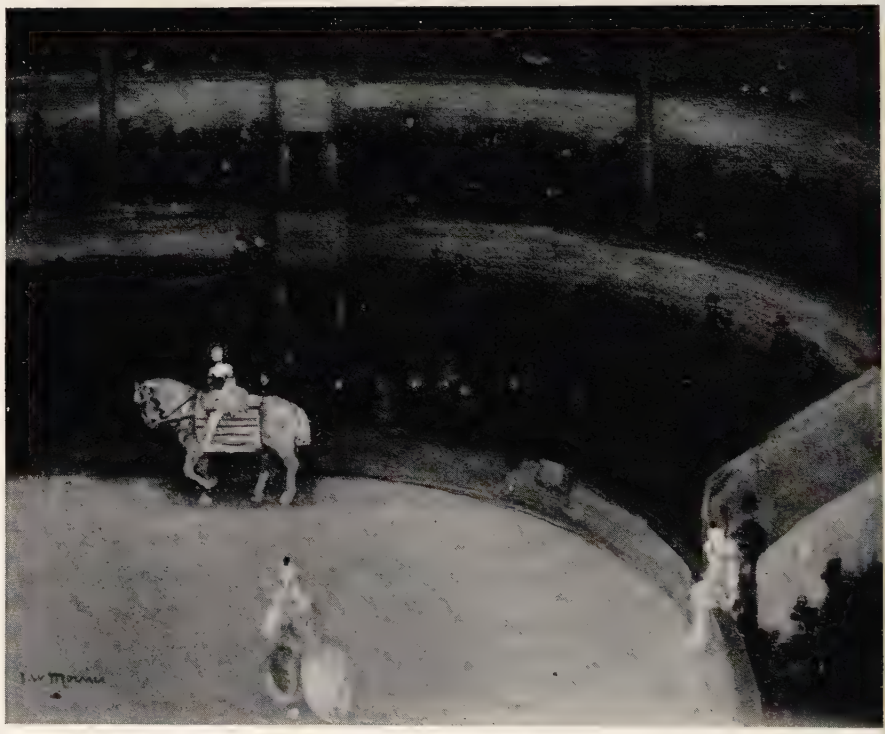
137 Maurice Cullen. *The Deep Pool, 1926*

Harvest (N.G.C.) shows him moving away from the city to deal more directly with the landscape, though the blown snow in the background reminds one that he was still dealing in atmospheric effects.

In later works such as *Quebec from Lévis* (1920, University Club of Montreal) the blur was gradually reduced to allow the characteristically broad patterns of the Canadian landscape to emerge. The process was complete in *The Deep Pool* (1926, coll. W.R. Watson, Montreal), with its broad, flat design. In *The Valley of the Devil River* (1927, N.G.C.) it has perhaps gone too far. Retaining the pure colours of the Impressionists, Cullen has adopted the true ones of the North. The mist has risen and only the clear air and broad contours remain. The poster-like result approaches the style of the Group of Seven though it lacks their power and conviction.

Two Canadians made themselves fully conversant with the actual contemporary art movements of their own day in Paris rather than being content to cling to outmoded Impressionism.

One of these, James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924)[15] himself participated in the Fauve movement in Paris and was the first painter of international stature that Canada produced. Leaving Montreal at an early



138 James Wilson Morrice. *The Circus, Montmartre*

age, he lived in Paris most of his life with periodic painting trips in Europe, North Africa, Canada, and the West Indies. His first important influence came from Whistler; and ever afterwards he was imbued with the ideal of art for art's sake. A series of delicate greyish Whistlerian

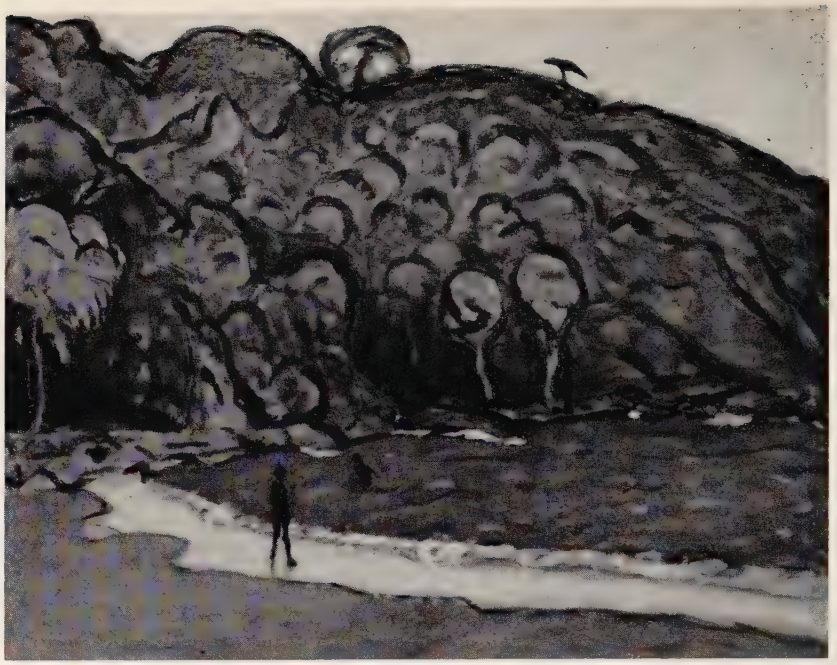
[15] *D. W. Buchanan,* James Wilson Morrice *(Toronto, 1936): John Lyman,* Morrice *(Montreal, 1945); D. W. Buchanan,* J. W. Morrice *(Toronto, 1947).*

139 James Wilson Morrice. *The Ferry, Quebec, 1909*

symphonies of the quays of the Seine (*Quai des Grands-Augustins,* N.G.C.) dates from about 1900. The very titles of pictures of this period, such as *Dieppe, the Beach, Grey Effect* (N.G.C.), were inspired by those of Whistler.

Paintings of the period of *The Circus, Montmartre* (*c.* 1905, N.G.C.) represent a more mature and personal style. Morrice progressively abandoned the static, flat compositions of the Japanese in favour of livelier arrangements and exchanged his Whistlerian softness for purer colours

140 James Wilson Morrice. *A Canadian Square, Winter*



141 James Wilson Morrice. *Landscape, Trinidad, 1921*

and clearer forms. Yet he continued to stress purely visual pleasure over the representation of objects or the expression of a mood. In some canvases like *The Beach, Saint-Malo* (*c.* 1901, Montreal Museum) he adopted a broad, simple view of the landscape. In subject and style such pictures are close to the work of his English friend Charles Conder. But in *The Race Course, Saint-Malo* (*c.* 1907, Montreal Museum) his personal style is seen to best advantage. Here is flowing beauty of a quasi-musical sort, to be experienced in the happy relationships of form to form and colour to colour.

Morrice's aesthetic cosmopolitanism becomes apparent when he paints a Canadian subject in just the same spirit as a European. The famous *Ferry, Quebec* (*c.* 1909, N.G.C.)* is a scheme of forms and colours composed with unerring good taste to produce a picture that is not bound by literal truth to nature. It was this generalized, non-particular style that was hailed in the forties by the Montreal school as the starting point for the development of Canadian painting. His other Canadian subjects are of great charm. *A Canadian Square in Winter* (*c.* 1905-8, coll. A. Sidney Dawes, Montreal) is one of several fine Quebec street scenes that were much imitated by his followers. He had an important effect upon several of his younger contemporaries, including A. Y. Jackson in his earlier phase.

Late in his life Morrice painted several times in the company of Matisse and Marquet and more nearly approximated the emphatic designs and stronger colours of the Fauves. This is evident in *Landscape, Trinidad* (1921, N.G.C.). Yet he always preserved a gentleness of design, a warmth of colour, and a 'tender melancholy' which some regarded as a romantic, Anglo-Saxon element in his art. Matisse called him 'the artist with the delicate eye'.[16]

The art of Ernest Lawson (1873-1939)[17] was basically similar to that of Morrice. But his link with the Fauves was through New York rather than Paris directly. Though he had been born in Halifax and exhibited with the Canadian Art Club in Toronto, he painted mostly in the United States. To judge from the careers of both Morrice and Lawson it is evident that the Canada of their day still held little place for the really independent contemporary artist.

Lawson's style shows the Fauvist preference for flat areas of pure colour (*Regatta at Halifax, c.* 1920, Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts, Halifax). But he too had an underlying romanticism that set him apart from the Europeans. This is felt in the festive richness of all his later works, such as *Winter* (*c.* 1914, N.G.C.)†, which have definite poetic or musical overtones. His richness of colour and forms he shared with his fellow-member of The Eight in New York, Maurice Prendergast, the American painter who was born at St John's, Newfoundland. With Prendergast, Lawson may have been one of the decisive influences upon David Milne, a leading Canadian painter of the following generation.

[16] *Buchanan,* James Wilson Morrice, *op. cit., p. 110.*

[17] *F. Newlin Price,* Ernest Lawson *(New York, 1930).*

**Pl. 139*

†*Pl. 135*

CHAPTER V

THE PERIOD OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

1

The 'National Movement' which took place in Canadian art during the nineteen-tens and -twenties cannot be explained without some reference to trends in western art as a whole. In the previous chapter it was noted that the first international movement to affect Canadian art was Impressionism. This movement, beginning in Paris about 1860, brought the Renaissance tradition of naturalism to its logical conclusion by analysing nature in terms of its light and colour. Thereafter—from 1880 onward—European painters progressively abandoned naturalism. Choosing one of two paths open to them, they either carried pictorial design to its logical conclusion in abstraction (Cézanne—Gauguin—the Fauves—the Cubists) or else they concentrated on expressing inner feelings (Van Gogh—the German Expressionists—the Surrealists). The latter trend, expressionism, did not affect Canada until the Group of Seven had got well under way. The former, decorative design, had entered our painting through Morrice early in the century.

Morrice's modified Fauvism struck a responsive chord in a few of his younger contemporaries in Montreal. One was Clarence Gagnon (1881-1942).[1] One of his early pictures, *Street Scene, Quebec, at Night* (*c.* 1910, N.G.C.) has the soft colours of Morrice, though it is less consistently a flat design. It is somewhat more of an illustration than any of Morrice's Quebec street scenes; it incorporates 'regionalism' as against the universalism of Morrice. Another was Albert H. Robinson (1881-1956) whose *Church in Westmount* (1922, N.G.C.) is on the other hand more obviously flat in design than Morrice's work. All his life

142 Clarence Gagnon. *Street Scene, Quebec, at Night*

143 Albert H. Robinson
Church in Westmount, 1923

144 Marc-Aurèle Fortin. *Paysage de Sainte-Rose*

[1] *A. H. Robson,* Clarence A. Gagnon *(Toronto, 1938).*

145 *Grain Elevators, Port Arthur*

Robinson continued to employ Morrice's lyric colour harmonies of rose and light blue. A third painter influenced by Morrice was A. Y. Jackson, who will be discussed with the Group of Seven.

A lesser but special European influence which came to bear on Canadian painting was *Art Nouveau*,[2] the style which governed the design of furniture, textiles, and other decorative arts for some years around 1900. It also dominated the productions of the commercial art studios such as Grip Limited in Toronto where five of the Group of Seven worked in their early days. The salient feature of *Art Nouveau* was its use of trailing plant forms which assumed elegant curves. The style entered into some of European painting at the turn of the century, particularly in the Germanic countries where the resulting manner was called *Jugendstil*. The art magazines of the period were saturated with the fashionable *Art Nouveau* which eventually proved to be a blind alley in the development of modern art.

The contribution of a painter who fits not so much by style as by period into the National Movement, Marc-Aurèle Fortin (1888-), is at present in process of being assessed.[3] His first lessons were from Ludger Larose in Montreal but his later studies were in Chicago, London, and Paris. In some of his paintings, such as the *Landscape at Sainte-Rose* (Séminaire de Joliette)*, the style suggests *Art Nouveau* or the Vienna Secession, while in others M. Ostiguy sees affinities to Gromaire. Whatever the influences upon him, his typical subjects, village landscapes, convey a nostalgic poetry of Canada's recent past.

In spite of all outside influences, however, the main motive and immediate impulse for the National Movement were supplied by Canada itself. A new wave of national feeling came to its climax about 1913, the year which saw the rise of the Toronto group of painters. Commerce and industry enjoyed a period of prosperity and expansion; immigration reached a high point with the opening of the West; and the atmosphere of optimism was epitomized by Laurier's famous dictum that the twentieth century was Canada's century.

The most significant buildings of the early years of the century were not the consciously designed works by academic architects but the functional designs by structural engineers, for bridges, factories, and grain elevators. These structures dealt in simple geometric forms and large masses, and wonderfully effective groupings often emerged from their functional designs. Allied to these was the work of the American pioneer of modern architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright. He is represented in Canada by a few buildings designed in association with a little known pupil,

146 Frank Lloyd Wright and Francis C. Sullivan
Public Library, Pembroke, Ontario, 1913

Francis C. Sullivan (fl. 1911-21?)[4] of Ottawa. One is the Public Library (1913) at Pembroke, Ontario. The treatment of the walls as screens of masonry, the rectangular Japanese scheme of fenestration, and the low horizontal shapes are characteristic of Wright's work at that period.

Rare as they are, such buildings remind one that the American influence was always close at hand. This fact is well symbolized in cities such as Windsor, Ontario, which literally live in the shadow of the United States. Perhaps it was this very proximity that set in motion trends in the arts which set Canada apart from its powerful neighbour. Since the eighties a group of poets, including Carman, Roberts, Lampman, and Scott, had been celebrating the beauties of nature in Canada. From then until the beginning of the First World War a number of art societies, museums, and galleries were founded in Canada. Along with

[2] *Nikolaus Pevsner*, Pioneers of Modern Design *(New York, 1949); H. F. Lenning*, The Art Nouveau *(The Hague, 1951); S. T. Madsen*, Sources of Art Nouveau *(Oslo, 1956).*

[3] *J. R. Ostiguy, 'Marc-Aurèle Fortin'*, Vie des Arts, *No. 23 (1961), pp. 26-31.*

*Pl. 144

[4] *R. H. Hubbard, 'Architecture in Ottawa'*, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal, op. cit.

147 Lawren Harris. *Bylot Island, 1930*

148 Harald Sohlberg. *Mountains: Winter Landscape*

these outward signs of interest in the arts went a conscious search on the part of young painters for new means of expressing the character of Canada.

2

Ever since 1850 the painter's art had enjoyed a position of primacy among the others. Now it assumed an even greater importance as the only distinctive art in the country. The painter held certain advantages over other artists. Unlike the writer he could transcend the language barrier in a bilingual country. He could enjoy greater freedom from his public than the architect from his clients. He was not obliged to depend on public expenditure like the sculptor. But the young painter of the day did not enjoy an easy life. He took up the challenge of a country unexplored by artists, travelled widely through unknown tracts, and battled with the critics and the public for the acceptance of new subjects and a new style of painting. Enthusiastic nationalism was probably the one lever that could have turned public opinion in favour of modern art in Canada. The public could not long remain indifferent to painters so virile in their outlook and so obviously in love with their country.

The leaders of the new movement[5] were eight youngish painters who gathered together in Toronto between 1910 and 1913. The senior was J. E. H. MacDonald (1873-1932) who had been active as a graphic designer since 1895 and had painted landscapes in his spare time. Tom Thomson (1877-1917) had been in Toronto as a commercial artist since 1905 and had taught himself to sketch landscape. In 1910 Lawren

[5] *F. B. Housser,* A Canadian Art Movement, the Story of the Group of Seven *(Toronto, 1926); Thoreau MacDonald,* The Group of Seven *(Toronto, 1944); Vancouver Art Gallery,* Group of Seven *(Exhibition catalogue, 1954).*

149 J. E. H. MacDonald. *Leaves in the Brook, 1919*

150 Gustaf Fjaestad. *Ripples*

Harris (1885-) returned to Toronto after studying in Germany and travelling as an illustrator for *Harper's*. In 1912 Arthur Lismer (1885-) and Frederick Varley (1881-) arrived from England and joined the commercial artists in Toronto. These latter also included Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945) and Frank H. Johnston (1888-1949). In 1913 the group was complete when A. Y. Jackson (1882-) was persuaded by Harris and MacDonald to move to Toronto from Montreal.

In 1912 MacDonald and Harris had gone to Buffalo to see an exhibition of Scandinavian painting at the Albright Art Gallery. This greatly impressed them as an example of what other northern countries could do in art. To judge from the catalogue, most of the landscapes in the exhibition, with their screen-like designs of trees, sky, and water, were examples of the Scandinavian version of *Jugendstil*. Harris is known to have been affected by a decorative composition, *Mountains,* by the Norwegian painter Harald Sohlberg[6]. It may have provided the inspiration for his powerful mountain canvases of a later period (*Bylot Island, c.* 1930, N.G.C.)*. MacDonald responded to a painting by Gustav Fjaestad of Sweden, *Ripples,*[7] which may hold the key to some of his later work such as *Leaves in the Brook* (1919, coll. Dr Arnold Mason, Toronto). But it is curious that the greatest of all the Scandinavians, Edvard Munch, who was represented in the exhibition, held no immediate attention, though his influence was felt later by MacDonald.

Meanwhile Thomson[8] had begun his short but brilliant career. He was the sturdy pioneering type of artist typical of the Group of Seven, though he died before the name was adopted in 1920. Self-taught, he began to sketch out of doors in oils about 1911. The first results, though rather dark in tone, proved that he had found his true *métier*. He found his true home in the wilds of Algonquin Park, a forest reserve in north-eastern Ontario. In the crucial year 1913 he met Jackson who made him aware of light, colour, and composition and counselled him in the painting of large canvases. The results were remarkable. His small landscape sketches showed a complete understanding of his subject-matter. A typical one, *Waterfall* (N.G.C.), gives a perfect and spontaneous impression of running water in the spring with its liquid gleams and rushing movement. *Sunset Sky* (N.G.C.) has all the breadth of a late Cullen within the area of a ten-inch panel; its effect is more powerful than Cullen by its concentration, vigour of execution, and immediacy of vision. All characteristic appearances, both quiet and dramatic, interested him. *Moose at Night* (N.G.C.) is a dramatic nocturne. *March* (N.G.C.) is an example of the quiet and typical. The sketches record an intense experience of the streams, lakes, woods, and changing seasons of the northern woods. Thomson brought to a sudden climax the old Canadian tradition of directness and sincerity in painting.

His finished canvases are understandably few. In them he organized the sketch material into strongly patterned compositions. I am sure that in the process he drew upon the *Art Nouveau* designs which he saw in the popular art magazines of his day. One example, a Swedish tapestry designed by Henrik Krogh, *Spruce Coppice,* which was reproduced in

[6]Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art *(exhibition catalogue, 1912-13), No. 156, reprod. p. 152.*

**Pls. 147, 148*

[7]Ibid., *No. 15, reprod. p. 131. Since writing the above I have found that a close similarity exists between MacDonald's* In the Pine Shadows, Evening *(1909, N.G.C.) and a large tapestry by Fjaestad dated 1907 in the National Museum Stockholm. Similarly, Harris'* Snow II *(c. 1915, N.G.C.) strongly resembles Fjaestad's* Winter Moonlight *(Stockholm).*

colour in *Studio* for 1913,[9] seems to have had a direct influence. The same long streamers of foliage forming a flat screen on the surface of the picture appear in several canvases like *Autumn's Garland* (1916?, N.G.C.) and the well known *Northern River* (1915, N.G.C.). A different sort of design is found in *The Jack Pine* (1916-17, N.G.C.) where the canvas is treated as a mosaic of large brush strokes that recall the work of the French Pointillists. The same technique appears in *The Pointers* (1915-16, Hart House, University of Toronto). This and

151 Henrik Krogh. *The Spruce Coppice* (*tapestry, woven by* M. M. Fjatterstrom)

152 Tom Thomson. *March*

153 Tom Thomson. *Northern River, 1915*

[8] *Blodwen Davies,* A Study of Tom Thomson *(Toronto, 1935); A. H. Robson,* Tom Thomson *(Toronto, 1937); R. H. Hubbard,* Tom Thomson *(Toronto, 1962).*

[9] *Vol. lviii (1913), p. 109.*

154 Tom Thomson. *The Jack Pine, 1916-17*

155 Tom Thomson. *Spring Ice, 1916*

Spring Ice (1916, N.G.C.) are perhaps the two canvases that best preserve the spontaneity of the sketches. In them the design seems not to have been superimposed on natural forms but to have emerged from nature. Even the big *Art Nouveau* arabesque that appears in *The West Wind* (1917, Art Gallery of Toronto) takes on a special lyric significance because it is used in conjunction with a symphony of autumn colours. In Thomson the colour and character of the northern landscape takes precedence over all formal devices.

The First World War temporarily eclipsed the National Movement. The Toronto group dispersed. Jackson went into the army, Lismer to Halifax, and others to various war work. Jackson and Varley later painted war records in Europe, as did Lismer and Johnston in Canada. But after the war they were reunited in Toronto except for Thomson who had drowned in Algonquin Park in 1917. In 1920 they held their first exhibition and adopted the name Group of Seven.

Their work at that time exhibited a high degree of unity. The most striking evidence of this was a common motif of composition: the single tree silhouetted against sky, water, and distant hills. This had of course been used earlier by Jackson in *Night, Georgian Bay* (1913, N.G.C.)* and by Thomson in *The Jack Pine* (1917). But now, in addition, the Group adopted the flat, decorative scheme of composition as developed by Thomson. At their second showing in 1921 both these features appeared in a series of large emphatic exhibition pieces. One was *September Gale* (1921, N.G.C.)† by Lismer, who interpreted the common formula according to his own temperament, using agitated forms expressive of the ceaseless movement in nature. Another was *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (1920, N.G.C.)‡ by Varley, who in his turn stressed the 'painterly' qualities of colour and texture.

Thus the Group of Seven, united in their chief aim of expressing the essence of Canada through her landscape, displayed a variety of personal styles. Before analysing these, it is well to note the Group's corporate history after 1921. Changes occurred in the membership.

*Pl. 167
†Pl. 159
‡Pl. 166

156 J. E. H. MacDonald. *Autumn in Algoma, 1922*

157 J. E. H. MacDonald. *Spring Breezes, High Park, 1912*

Johnston's withdrawal in 1922 left the number at six until Alfred Casson (1898-) joined in 1926. The accession of Edwin H. Holgate (1892-) in 1931 brought it to eight, and Lemoine FitzGerald (1890-1956) in 1932 made it nine. The last two artists will be discussed in the next chapter. In 1933 the Group was disbanded and a larger organization, the Canadian Group of Painters, took its place.

3

MacDonald[10] was the poet of the Group, not only because he wrote poems himself and admired the writings of Whitman and Thoreau but also that his pictures sound a lyric note. The early *Spring Breezes, High Park* (1912, N.G.C.) with its green fields, oaks, and cloudy sky is among the few adequate renderings of our pastoral landscape. Against

[10] *A. H. Robson*, J. E. H. MacDonald *(Toronto, 1937); E. R. Hunter*, J. E. H. MacDonald *(Toronto, 1940).*

158 J. E. H. MacDonald. *The Solemn Land, 1921*

this quiet background *The Tangled Garden* (1916, N.G.C.) came as a sensation. Its riotous colours and agitated forms outraged the critics who called it by names that today are employed to condemn abstract painting. Later his compositions became more simple and monumental, as in those two great epics of the lonely North painted in 1921 and 1922 respectively, *The Solemn Land* (N.G.C.) and *Autumn in Algoma*

159 Arthur Lismer. *September Gale, 1921*

(N.G.C.). A little later appeared an interesting group of smaller paintings in elegaic mood, such as *Little Turtle Lake* (1923-5, coll. Dr G. R. McCall, Montreal). These approached the mystery and musical flow of Edvard Munch's work, which MacDonald had seen in Buffalo in 1912. But in his latest works, many of which were painted in the Rocky Mountains (*Goat Range,* 1932, coll. Mrs H.P. de Pencier, Toronto) the style

was decidedly flat and linear, as if he were harking back to his early training as a graphic artist.

Lismer[11] began in the impressionist manner typified in *The Guide's Home* (N.G.C.) which was painted on his first trip to Algonquin Park in 1914. Sparkling with small touches of colour, this early picture has a rather thin design of young trees that makes it seem formless beside the later paintings. *The 'Olympic' with Returned Soldiers* (N.G.C.), painted in 1918 for the Canadian War Memorials, shows how strength of composition, taking its cue from the dazzle-painting of the ship, entered into his style. Then followed the famous *September Gale* (1921, N.G.C.) with its rhythmic pattern and resonant colours. A few years later Lismer began his exploration of mood in landscape, ranging in his work from the sombreness of *Rain in the North Country* (1924, N.G.C.) to the exhilaration of *October on the North Shore, Lake Superior* (1927, N.G.C.) or the intimacy of *Rocky Channel, Georgian Bay* (1936, Private coll.).

160 Arthur Lismer. *The 'Olympic' with Returned Soldiers at Halifax, 1918*

Several of Carmichael's earlier paintings such as *The Upper Ottawa at Mattawa* (1924, N.G.C.) exhibit the orthodox tree-motif. Later he adopted a severe, linear style and painted the northern Ontario landscape so thinly that the very air seems cold and rarified (*Evening, North Shore, Lake Superior,* 1930, Private coll.). Casson[12] was at first close in style to Carmichael. *Church at Magnetawan* (1933, N.G.C.)* was as simple and straightforward a design as it could possibly be. Later he developed his own scheme of stylization. Johnston, whose place Casson took in the Group, soon fell away from the strength of early canvases like *Fire-swept, Algoma* (1920, N.G.C.)† and ceased to be a significant painter.

Like the rest Varley[13] painted landscapes‡, the best known of which was *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (1920), already mentioned. But his talent was not limited to the painting of scenery. The war paintings, especially *Some Day the People will Return* (1918, N.G.C.), rank with those of Paul Nash among the few personal and moving records of the First World War. About 1920 he began a series of austere portraits like the *Vincent Massey* (1920, Hart House, University of Toronto) and became the country's best figure painter. The fine *Vera* (*c.* 1930, coll. The

161 Franklin Carmichael. *Evening, North Shore, Lake Superior, 1930*

[11]Arthur Lismer: Paintings 1913-1949 *(exhibition catalogue, 1950); J. A. B. McLeish,* September Gale *(Toronto, 1955).*

[12]*Paul Duval,* A. J. Casson *(Toronto, 1952).*

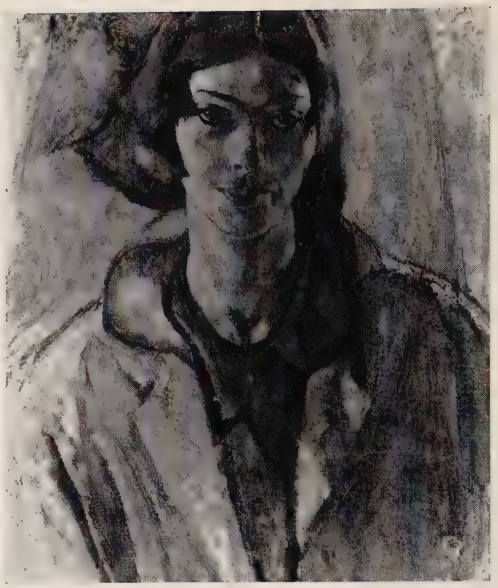
[13]F. H. Varley: Paintings 1915-1954 *(exhibition catalogue, 1954-5).*

**Pl. 165*

†*Pl. 164*

‡*Pls. 162, 166*

162 F. H. Varley. *Some Day the People Will Return, 1918*



163 F. H. Varley. *Vera*

165 A. J. Casson
Anglican Church at Magnetawan, 1933

164 Francis H. Johnston. *Fire-swept Algoma, 1920*

166 F. H. Varley. *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay, 1920*

167 A. Y. Jackson. *Night, Georgian Bay, 1913*

168 A. Y. Jackson. *A Copse, Evening, 1918*

Rt Hon. Vincent Massey) reveals a sympathetic understanding of physiognomy and an ability like that of Augustus John to distil a characteristic expression. The later landscapes like *Ottawa River* (*c.* 1943, coll. Dr H. A. Thompson, Toronto) are deeply poetic in character and remind one variously of Turner and Munch. *Night Ferry* (1938, coll. C.S. Band, Toronto) was painted during Varley's stay in Vancouver and shows that he possessed something of the excited agitation of Kokoschka.

Jackson and Harris were to develop to the greatest extent the possibilities latent in the Group's style of 1921. Jackson's[14] first significant docu-

[14] *A. H. Robson,* A. Y. Jackson *(Toronto, 1938);* A. Y. Jackson: Paintings 1902-1953 *(exhibition catalogue, 1953); A. Y. Jackson,* A Painter's Country *(Toronto, 1958).*

169 A. Y. Jackson. *Barns, 1926*

ment was *The Edge of the Maple Wood* (1910, N.G.C.), the picture which first brought him to the attention of MacDonald and Harris. It illustrates not only the knowledge of Impressionism he had gained in France but also a direct approach to his art that is decidedly Canadian. Then in 1913 came the first northern landscapes, *Night, Georgian Bay* (N.G.C.) and *Terre Sauvage* (N.G.C.), the forms and colours of which carry reminiscences of Morrice. This style shaded into another that involved a more detailed and colourful portrayal of nature and perhaps had some affinities to the Scandinavians (*Red Maple,* 1914, N.G.C.).

Jackson's work as a war artist brought him into contact with the rhythmic, expressive style of Paul Nash, the English painter. This is reflected in several pictures like *A Copse, Evening* (1918, N.G.C.). Though some of his work on his return to Toronto had the pure lyric beauty of *Early Spring, Georgian Bay* (1920, N.G.C.), the sombre *November* (1922, N.G.C.) with its dark hill and livid trees seems still to be in the spirit of Nash.

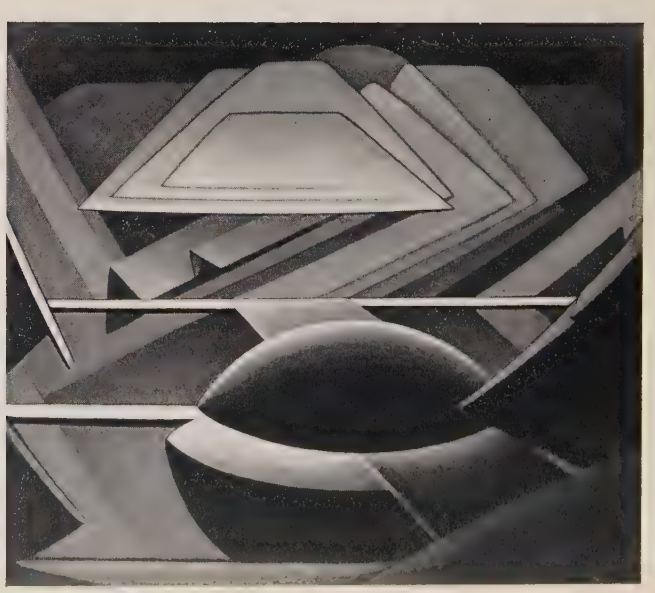
Then energy began to appear in his work. It is felt in the forceful, excited lines of pictures such as *Barns* (1926, Art Gallery of Toronto).

170 Lawren Harris. *January Thaw, Edge of Town, 1921*

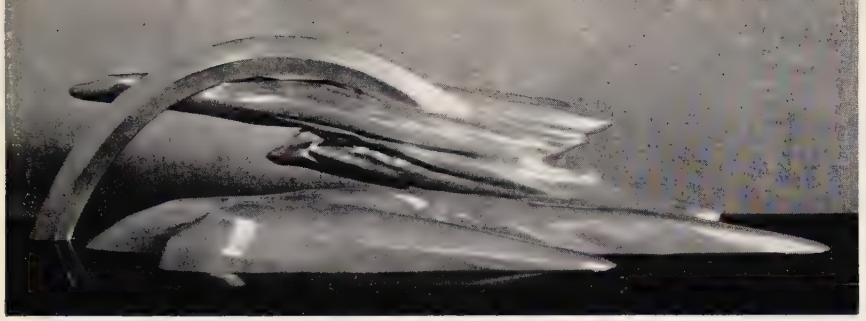
171 LAWREN HARRIS. *Lake Superior*

These were among the first paintings in Canada to give evidence of the influence of expressionism, that important trend in European art which had been inaugurated by Van Gogh. But there was no copying of Europe. In Jackson a vigorous, independent art developed apace with European expressionism, for his work was inseparable from the Canadian scene.

In the twenties he became the Group's most energetic traveller. His Arctic subjects (*The North Shore of Baffin Island, c.* 1929, North York Collegiate Institute, Toronto) are full of the crystalline cold of that



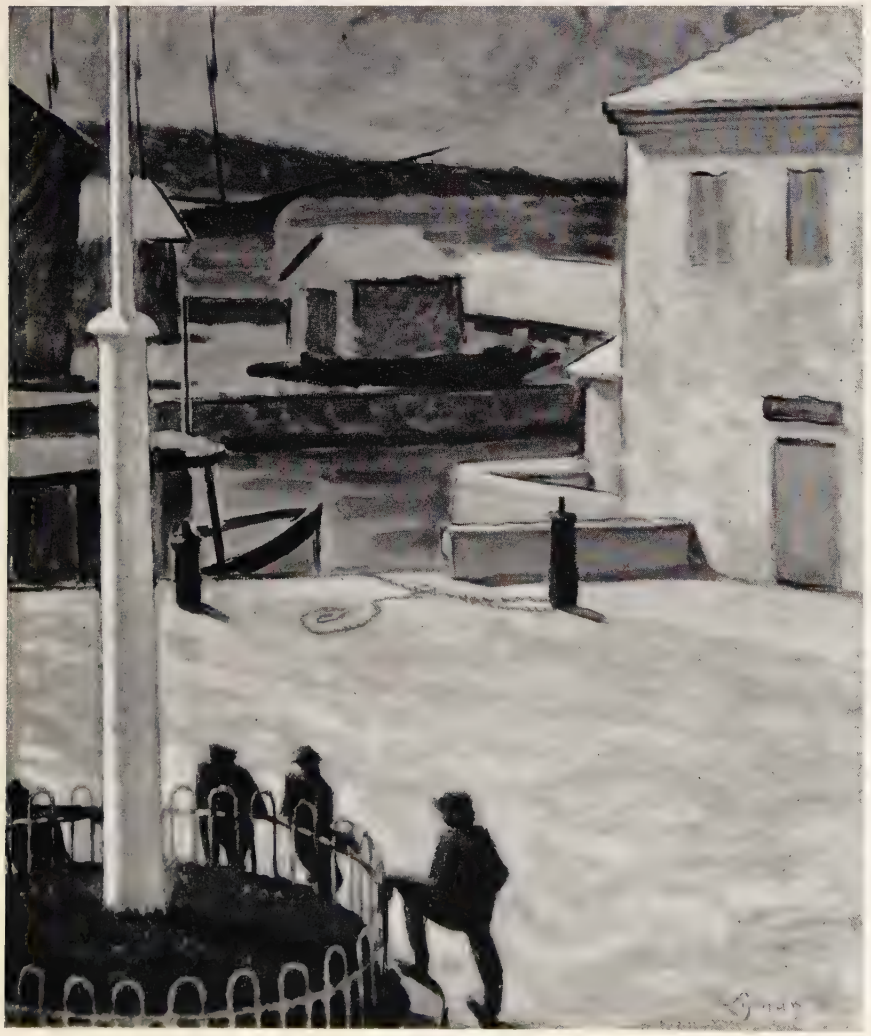
172 LAWREN HARRIS. *Composition No. 8, 1937*



173 Elizabeth Wyn Wood. *Reef and Rainbow*

region. And for other regions—*Grain Elevators at Night, Pincher Creek* (1947, coll. D.W. Buchanan, Ottawa)—he found methods of expressing their essential qualities.

Harris,[15] a driving force in the Group since the beginning, went all the way from decorative design to abstract expressionism. After his return from Europe he painted the shabbier streets of Toronto and Halifax in what was then termed a 'socialistic' manner. *January Thaw, Edge of Town* (1921, N.G.C.)* is an example of his flat decorative compositions and of the human sympathy that suffused them. Here the paint was fairly



174 John Lyman. *Bermuda*

175 Emily Carr. *Forest Landscape, I*

fluid in its application and warm in colour. But in the twenties, as his subjects moved away from the cities and into northern Ontario and the West, the paint became thin and cold. Pictures like *Lake Superior* (1924, coll. C.S. Band, Toronto)† are ultimately simple in their composition, powerful in their forms, and dynamic in their lines. There is something religious about these austere symbolic trees and mountains. They would

[15]Lawren Harris: Paintings 1910-1948 *(exhibition catalogue, 1948).*

[16]*Paul Dumas,* Lyman *(Montreal, 1944).*

**Pl. 170*

†*Pl. 171*

176 Emily Carr. *Blunden Harbour*

be Gothic if it were not for the clean blue sphere in which they have their immaterial existence. As time went on Harris further simplified his style, expressing the great inner forces of nature by means of a few forms and lines, as in *Composition No. 8* (*c.* 1937, Private coll.)*, until the process eventually led him to discard subject-matter altogether. Yet though specific reference to nature is absent in the works from 1940 on (*Abstract Painting, c.* 1950, N.G.C.), there remained an underlying feeling of nature's presence and of Harris's essential quality, aspiration.

The Group of Seven provided a general stimulus for a number of other artists including several sculptors. A few portrait heads like that of *Sir Frederick Banting* (*c.* 1934, N.G.C.) by Frances Loring (1887-), have a strength equalling that of the Group, though here the specific influences probably came from Carl Milles and Meštrović. Elizabeth Wyn Wood (1903-) in her landscape reliefs such as *Passing Rain* (1926, N.G.C.) was one of the few to attempt the expression of the Canadian landscape in the rigid medium of stone.

4

Three important painters who were contemporaries of the Group of Seven stood apart from the National Movement proper, though one, Emily Carr (1871-1945), came into its orbit late in life. The others were John Lyman (1886-) and David Milne (1882-1953).

John Lyman,[16] a pupil of Matisse, has always upheld the French ideal of 'pure' painting against the pressures of nationalism. His landscapes like those of Morrice, whether they were painted in Bermuda (*Landscape, Bermuda,* 1914, N.G.C.), or France, or Canada, have retained the universal modern qualities of design, composition, and harmonious colour. They have avoided the ephemeral and (to him) disturbing element of regionalism. Lyman was on hand in Montreal in 1939 to inspire the modern movement there and to be recognized as one of its pioneers.

The case of Emily Carr[17] was different. She had been painting ever since the nineties but made the break with the artistic isolation of Vancouver Island only when she went to France in 1910. There she seems to have received her first real impetus from the Fauves, possibly through one of their followers, the New Zealand painter Frances Hodgkins. Emily Carr's paintings of this period, such as *Autumn in France* (*c.* 1911, N.G.C.) exhibit the intense colours and abbreviated designs of Fauvism. She returned to paint the Indian villages of the West Coast and

177 Emily Carr. *Totem Poles, No. 15, 1912*

[17] Emily Carr, her Paintings and Sketches *(exhibition catalogue, 1945); Emily Carr,* Growing Pains *(Toronto, 1946); and other autobiographical books by this artist.*

*Pl. 172

178 David Milne. *Grand Concourse, the Bronx, 1915*

was a country school-teacher who about 1904 decided to become a painter and left his Ontario village of Paisley to study in New York. I think that he must have been influenced by the style of Maurice Prendergast (*cf. Picnic,* 1915, N.G.C.) or of Ernest Lawson. He was certainly affected by what he saw of international modern art at the Armory Show of 1913 in New York, at which he was an exhibitor himself.

Early paintings such as *Grand Concourse, The Bronx* (1915, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto), a city scene painted in New York, are strongly Fauve in character though, paradoxically, they show a strong individuality in the forms and in the character of the line. This individuality increased throughout his life which was spent in comparative seclusion. After leaving New York in 1915 on account of poverty he settled in the Berkshire Hills and painted a series of exquisite landscapes in both dry-brush water colour (*Mountains,* 1917, N.G.C.)*† and in oils (*Boston Corner,* 1917, N.G.C.). By this time decorative pattern and a sensitive calligraphy were happily wedded in his work in an almost Chinese manner. The same style appears with subtle differences of colour in a series of water colours of England, France, and Flanders which he painted for the Canadian War Memorials.

their totem poles in this same spirited and colourful manner (*Totem Poles, No. 15,* 1912, Private coll.)*.

Years of neglect, however, discouraged her, and during the twenties she almost stopped painting. It was on her first visit to eastern Canada in 1927 that she met the Group of Seven and was shocked into action by seeing the vigorous canvases of Lawren Harris. Returning, she began to paint on a large scale in the austere manner, often using the brooding totem-poles as motifs in her canvases. *Blunden Harbour*† (*c.* 1928, N.G.C.) is the most monumental of these works. In the years that followed, her art underwent a remarkable development. This may have been affected partly by what she saw of the dynamic style of Mark Tobey, the American West Coast painter who visited Victoria, but at any rate it gave evidence of the liberation of an ardent spirit. In the late canvases and especially the large oil-on-paper studies (*Forest Landscape I,* N.G.C.)‡ the trees of the rain forest spiral dizzily upwards as if to express the immense fertility of the earth and the irresistible force of nature. In occasional pictures such as *Seascape* (N.G.C.) there is, however, the sensation of a supernatural, quivering calm.

David Milne[18] was totally different from all his contemporaries. He

179 David Milne. *Boston Corner, 1917*

[18]David Milne *(exhibition catalogue, 1955-6). A. Jarvis,* Milne *(Toronto, 1962).*

*Pl. 177
†Pl. 176
‡Pl. 175
*†Pl. 183

After the war Milne returned to the Berkshires and continued his delicate painting of landscape. The fine water colour *Pink Reflections, Bishop's Pond* (1920, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto) is an example from this period. After a winter in Ottawa[19] (*The E.B. Eddy Mill,* water colour, 1923, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto)* and Montreal, he moved to the Adirondacks. There his oils became more thinly painted and less obviously patterned, as is seen in *Marcy, Haystack, and McIntyre* (1925-8, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto). The range of his colours became so limited that the paintings were almost monochromes. By this time he had given up painting in water colours.

In 1928 he returned to Canada for good after an absence of almost twenty-five years. At first he lived at the county town of Palgrave near Toronto (1929-32) and there painted a series of peaceful farm- and town-scapes in which strange and original colour harmonies appeared: elephant grey, white, and purple in *The Empty House* (*c.* 1930, N.G.C.) and in the beautiful *Water Lilies, Timagami* (1928, Hart House, University of Toronto); black, green, and red in *Painting Place* (1930, coll. the Rt Hon. Vincent Massey). Another important phase of his activity at this time was his work in dry-point; of this medium a fine example is *Still Water and Fish* (1941). These prints with their sparing use of line

180 David Milne. *Bay Street at Night, 1941*

181 David Milne. *Water Lillies, Timagami, 1928*

[19] 1923-4.

*Pl. 184

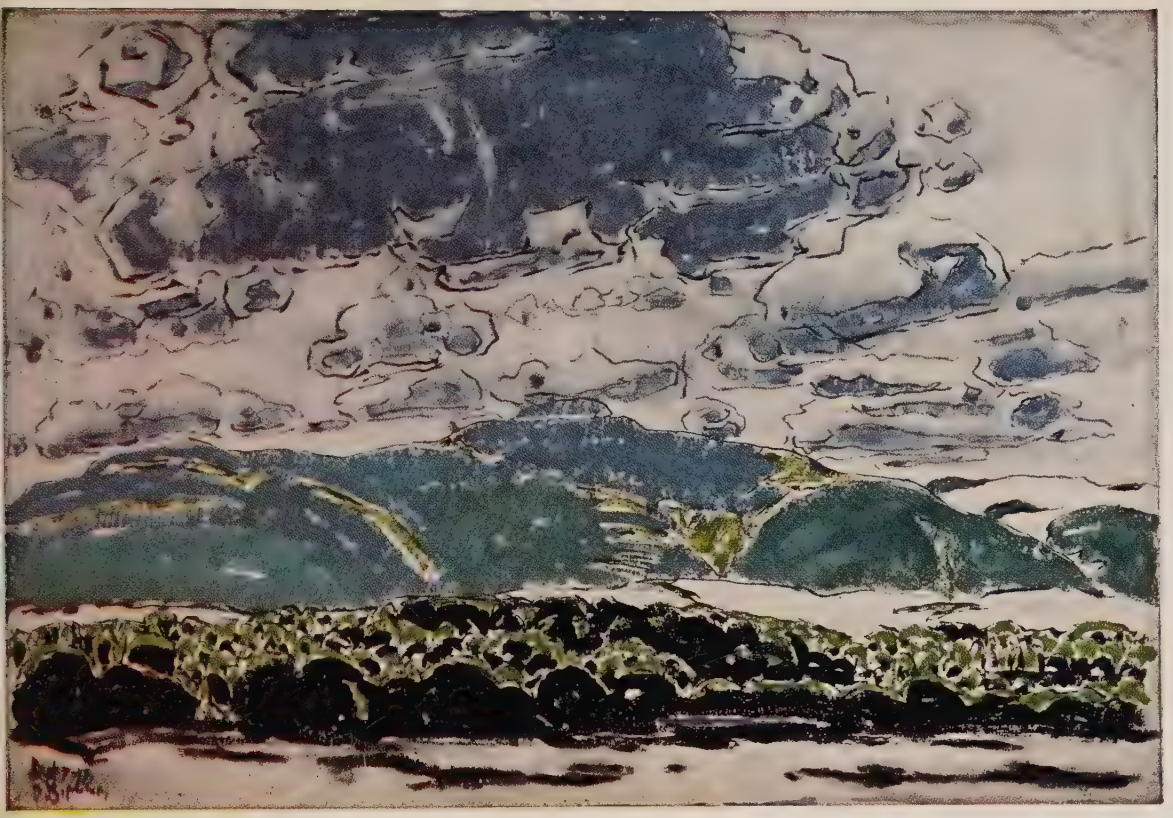
182 David Milne. *Rites of Autumn, 1943*

and fastidious colour are probably the most original graphic works ever produced in Canada.

During the periods which he spent at Six Mile Lake in the Muskoka district (1932-9) (*Bare Rock Begins to Show,* 1936, coll. Alan Jarvis, Toronto) and at Uxbridge, Haliburton, and Toronto (1940-52) Milne's oils became even simpler and stronger in composition. They were now dominated by an even more restricted colour scheme of white, orange-red, and black.* They have that combination of sensitivity and strength that is so rarely met in painting or in people, always excepting the Chinese.

In 1937 he had resumed painting in water colours, and his development in this medium was the most remarkable event of his later life. Using it with energy, freedom, and economy he developed it into a sensitive means of expressing his emotional response to his surroundings. He could be sprightly in the fantasies such as *First Snow, Bethlehem* (1941, Art Gallery of Toronto); festive in the still life subjects like *Candlestick and Box* (1946, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto); strong in the city scenes like *Bay Street at Night* (1941, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto); and poetic in a deeply Oriental sense in the landscapes such as *The Lake* (1948, coll. D.C. Rowland, Toronto). With his completely personal outlook and technique Milne was one of the great forerunners of contemporary painting in Canada.

**Cf. Pl. 185*



183 David Milne. *The Mountains, 1917*

184 David Milne. *The E. B. Eddy Mill, Ottawa, 1923*

185 David Milne. *Maple Leaves, 1937*

CONTEMPORARY ART

1

Contemporary art in Canada[1] may be conveniently dated from the disbanding of the Group of Seven in 1933. At that time Canadian art ceased to be dominantly national and began to lay itself open to the manifold influences of international modern art. No longer unanimous in their outlook, Canadian artists began to follow a wide variety of new courses. The growth of Canada as a nation played an important part in effecting these changes. The thirty years between 1933 and the present have witnessed such a transformation in the country as a whole that the arts could hardly remain untouched. The Second World War, economic and political expansion, and a great wave of nationalism have combined to make artists more numerous, self-confident, and cosmopolitan.

Canadian art today feels the pull of the two opposing forces of nationalism and internationalism. Some artists believe that the representation of Canada's own vast resources of subject-matter should take priority. Others regarding this attitude as old-fashioned and provincial prefer to take their chances in the larger world of modern art. The tension between nationalism and internationalism and their corresponding languages of style has at least had the effect of stirring up controversy and therefore interest among the public.

The scope of art in Canada has broadened perceptibly. The century-old dominance of painting has at last been challenged. A number of new art forms are now exploited, including industrial design, town-planning, and typography. Sculpture and the graphic arts have some distinguished exponents, and the decorative arts[2] show definite signs of new life. Architecture has again come to the fore because so many new buildings have been needed in the cities during the post-war period. Architecture is resuming its ancient role as mistress of the arts through the inclusion of painting and sculpture in the designs of new buildings. Painting and sculpture are themselves more closely related to architecture through the common use of simple, monumental forms. In Canada as elsewhere a unity is appearing in the arts for the first time since the eighteenth century.

Contemporary art and its many movements are notoriously hard to assess. In attempting to do this one runs the same risks as are involved in the formation of a collection of current art for a museum. If recent history is any guide, a reaction will set in about twenty years from now which will seem to set at nought the judgments of today. Another twenty may pass before it is admitted that today's choices have merit. After sixty years or so the cycle will be complete when someone proclaims the works to be treasures. Even if he is aware of this and of other obstacles in his way—including his own personal preferences or blind-spots—the historian of contemporary art is still faced with the bewildering spectacle which art presents to us today. Probably the most one can do in a brief span is to indicate some of the main categories into which modern art falls and make such tentative interpretations of the works as are possible from such a short perspective.

186 L. L. FitzGerald. *Williamson's Garage, 1927*

[1] *See in addition to the general references (page 17): Maurice Gagnon,* Sur un état actuel de la peinture canadienne, *op. cit.; Malcolm Ross, ed.,* The Arts in Canada: a Stock-taking at Mid-century *(Toronto, 1958).*

[2] *For example the pottery of Kjeld and Erica Deichmann, the silver of Gilles Beaugrand, and the enamels of Françoise Desrochers-Drolet.*

187 L. L. FitzGerald. *Two Apples*

188 L. L. FitzGerald. *Two Apples* (*detail*)

189 CHARLES COMFORT. *Tadoussac, 1935*

2

One category of recent painting, the representational, is an obvious starting point for a discussion of contemporary art. It is natural that one group of artists who grew up during the period of the Group of Seven should carry on the regional or national mode of expression. Such artists, however, have worked towards a greater simplicity and subjectivity of style and in no sense imitate the work of the Group of Seven.

The Winnipeg painter LeMoine FitzGerald (1890-1956),[3] a member of the Group of Seven in its last year, offers one example of divergence from the style of the National Movement. Instead of a bold stylization of nature he adopted as the basis of his art a precise draughtsmanship and a complete realism of approach. In doing so he had plenty of precedent in Canadian art of the past. The Winnipeg backyards which he painted (*Williamson's Garage*, 1927, N.G.C.)* and drew were a far cry from the stark northern landscapes of the Group. FitzGerald never attempted to vulgarize his art into a mid-western regional style

[3] L. L. FitzGerald *(exhibition catalogue, 1958).*

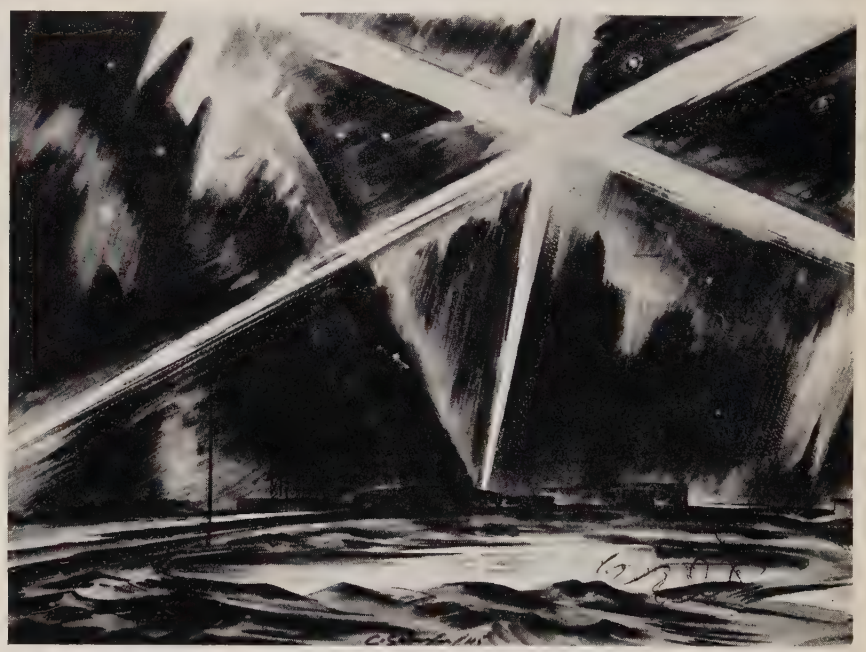
*Pl. 186

190 Will Ogilvie. *Bombed Houses, Caen, 1944*

such as flourished in the United States under Benton, Curry, and Grant Wood. His later drawings, such as *Four Apples on Tablecloth* (1947, Winnipeg Art Gallery) show an art too mathematical and personal to become illustrative.* Yet his style never ceased to be expressive of the clear air and spaciousness of his region.

The clean exactitude of FitzGerald appeared in sturdier and more 'painterly' form in the paintings of Charles Comfort (1900-) such as *Tadoussac* (1935. coll. the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey). In one sense Comfort went further along the path of abstraction than FitzGerald by refashioning his subjects into strong plastic arrangements. It was not that he intended to destroy their reality or regional character but rather, by reducing them to their geometric essentials of form, to strengthen their impact. From this standpoint the pictures enhanced the fundamental realities of a region in a way that approached surrealism. This kind of painting has by some been called 'Magic Realism'. From another standpoint the pictures are suggestive of the clean, economic forms of modern architecture.

The new architecture as developed in Europe by Le Corbusier, Gro-



191 Carl Schaefer. *Searchlight, Battle of Britain, 1945*

192 Fellheimer *and* Wagner. *Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway Station, Hamilton, 1933*

*Cf. Pls. 187, 188

193 Edwin H. Holgate. *Ludovine, 1930*

194 Jack Humphrey. *Main Street, Afternoon*

pius, and Mies van der Rohe was at this time making its first appearance in Canada. An example from the early thirties is the Toronto, Hamilton, and Buffalo Railway Station (1933) at Hamilton by a New York firm, Fellheimer and Wagner. The simple cubic shapes, the rounded corners, and the windows 'rushing round' the corners were the features of the International Style most imitated by its first North American followers. The story of architecture in Canada will be continued at a later point in this chapter.

To return to painting, Carl Schaefer (1903-) was another who grew up under the influence of the Group of Seven. His water colours of the Ontario farmlands, like *Fall Ploughing* (1937, coll. Mrs J.S. McLean, Toronto) not only represent a more intimate aspect of the landscape than the lonely North, but also because of the gentler medium admit of the element of mood and personal expression. By their romanticism they provide a Canadian parallel to the work of the American regionalist painter Charles Burchfield. In Schaefer's paintings of the Second World War, such as *Searchlights* (1945, N.G.C.)*, he discovered strong abstract designs in actual scenes.

Still another whose formation took place under the aegis of the Group was Will Ogilvie (1901-). He is unprolific and his work is quiet and sensitive. But for all their fastidiousness of drawing and softness of colour his paintings have a subtle strength. This is to be appreciated especially in a distinguished series of war paintings. *Bombed Houses, Caen* (1944, N.G.C.)† illustrates the beauty which he like David Milne before him was able to find amid the destruction of war.

Some artists have broadened out the scope of representational painting to include the human figure. Except for Varley the Group of Seven had been too preoccupied with scenery to pay much attention to figure painting. Edwin H. Holgate (1892-), actually a member of the Group in its second last year, treated the figure in the simplified, monumental manner which the others had reserved for landscape. His *Ludovine* (1930, coll. the Rt Hon. Vincent Massey) he composed in terms of a few massive forms, and he deliberately made the picture into a symbol of a national type of person, the French Canadian girl.

The figure paintings of the New Brunswick painter Jack Humphrey (1901-) are different in character from those of Holgate. The earlier ones announce the arrival on the Canadian scene of influences from the School of Paris and the Mexicans. But by the period of his *Portrait of a*

*Pl. 191

†Pl. 190

195 Henri Masson. *Les Patineurs, 1944*

Girl (1947, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John) these influences have been assimilated and Humphrey reinterprets the Canadian tradition of directness and simplicity in a modern way through his own quiet temperament. His landscapes such as *Main Street, Afternoon* (*c.* 1949, coll. Dr A. Skinner, Saint John) display the same combination of universality and personal integrity which is perhaps a sign of our growing cultural maturity. The well digested influences of Cézanne and John Marin among others may still be detected here but the picture is most remarkable for its expression of the unique atmosphere of the city of Saint John.

A few other painters have made this synthesis in their art. Two Ottawa painters, Henri Masson (1907-) and Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904-1949) invented a modern method of painting such interesting local genre subjects as street games (Masson: *Les Patineurs,* 1944, N.G.C.), country dances, and parades (MacLeod: *School Garden,* Private coll.). They made their pictures lively by the use of strong darks and flashing lights and agitated forms. Others who have painted genre include the animated André Biéler (1896-) (*Election Day, Sainte-Adèle,* Art Gallery of Toronto, 1939) and the gentle Lillian Freiman (1908-) (*Street Musicians,* N.G.C.). Like the latter, Jack Nichols (1921-) is set

196 Lillian Freiman. *Street Musicians*

197 Jack Nichols. *Mess Deck, 1943*

apart by the 'inner' quality of his work. His earlier paintings and drawings, especially those of war subjects like *Mess Deck* (1943, N.G.C.), had a mysterious sadness that was inspired by El Greco or the early Picasso. But in his recent lithographs made in Paris (*Circus Person,* 1957) he has risen to originality and real quality. They combine beauty of texture in the black and white medium with an expression of humanity which (one feels) springs from a real sympathy for his subjects.

In landscape too the path of representational art has led away from the style of the Group of Seven. The earlier paintings of the Russian-born Toronto painter Paraskeva Clark (1898-) show the influence upon her of Cézanne, Derain, and other Paris painters. But they also show a tautness and angularity that are peculiar to her (*Wheatfield,* 1936, coll. Douglas Duncan, Toronto). The more composed Louis Muhlstock (1904-), a Montreal painter, expresses in *Wet Day, Ste Famille Street* (1939, coll. Mrs I.H. Weldon, Toronto) a personal mood of loneliness evoked by contemplation of the urban scene.

The element of expressionism becomes stronger in another Montreal painter Fritz Brandtner (1896-). His *City from a Night Train* (1947, N.G.C.) is a forceful design of angular forms and flashing colours which recall his early connection with the German Expressionists. This picture, which expresses the excitement and complexity of life in a great city, is symbolic of one path along which Canadian art has travelled: away from the northern fastnesses and back to the city and all its social

198 Jack Nichols. *Circus Person (lithograph)*

199 Fritz Brandtner. *City from a Night Train, 1947*

problems. The work of Marian Scott (1906-) is similar in spirit though closer in feeling to the English than to the European painters by virtue of its gentle romanticism.

Another avenue open to painters of representational bent is 'the primitive'. The Quebec painter Jean-Paul Lemieux (1904-) in a series of rather contrived pageants and religious subjects painted in the thirties —an example is *Lazare* (1941, Art Gallery of Toronto)—placed his figures in settings that were in part inspired by the Italian Primitives and by the folk-painters. Recently, in a series of distinctive landscapes and figures, he has incorporated the soft colours and flat designs of the Morrice tradition into his style of primitive simplicity. He interprets his subjects (*Le visiteur du soir,* 1956, N.G.C.)* in the traditional, reticent Canadian way, but by employing a drastically simplified perspective he lends them a surrealist intensity. The British Columbia painter Edward J. Hughes (1913-) invests his landscapes such as *Car Ferry at Sidney* (1952, N.G.C.) with the dreamlike clarity that is found in the works of other 'primitives' like Henri Rousseau, *le douanier*.

Also endowed with this 'Magic Realism' are the paintings of Alexander Colville (1920-). But his subjects such as *Child and Dog* (1952, N.G.C.)† or *Hound in Field* (1958, N.G.C.)‡ are more universal in their appeal. A wonderful clarity of line and exactitude of modelling give them a heightened reality, yet the expression is controlled and quiet. Colville's work shows a puritan fastidiousness and a cool intellectuality —qualities refreshing amid the wildness that rages through modern art.

*Pl. 200

†Pl. 202

‡Pl. 201

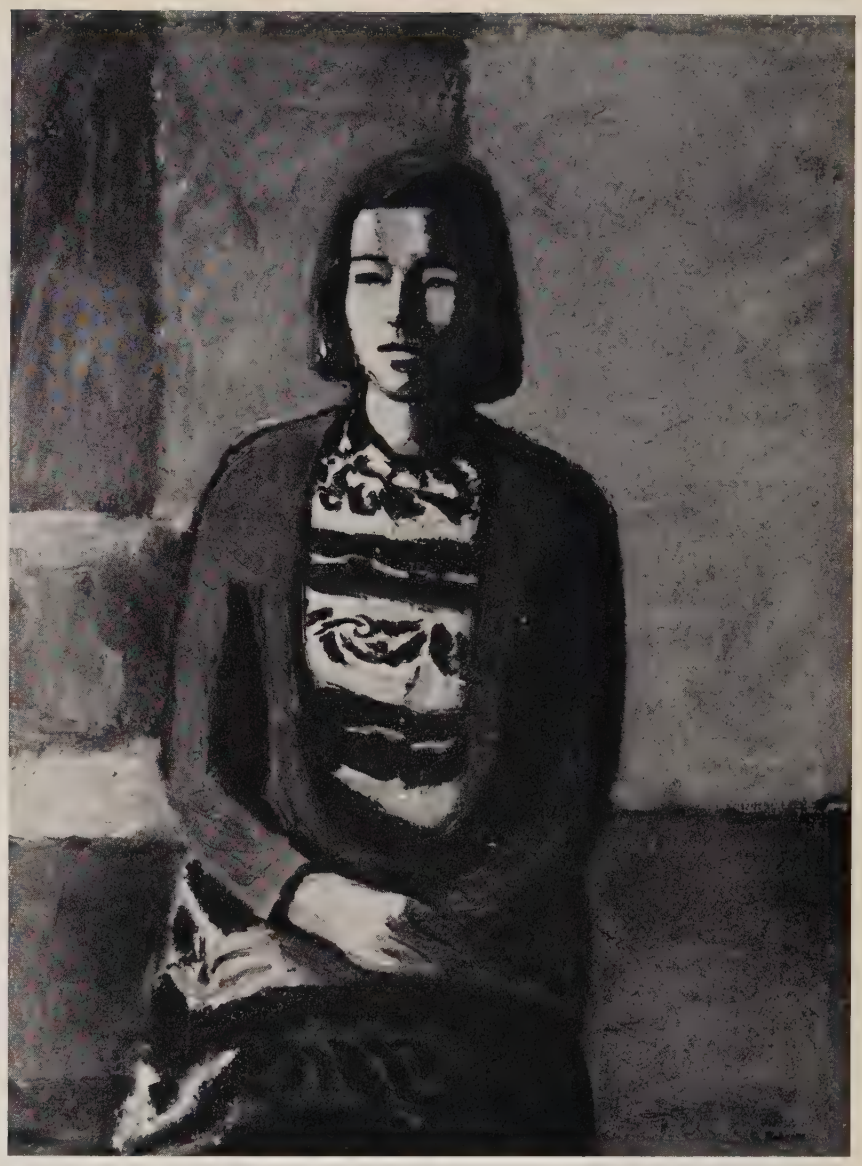
200 Jean-Paul Lemieux. *Le visiteur du soir, 1956*

3

A second general category of recent art has been created by an unorganized but fairly articulate group of artists in Montreal. These have been responsible for the most spectacular movement that has taken place in Canadian art since the Group of Seven. Their period of greatest activity was between 1939 and 1955, after which time their work became too diversified and they themselves too scattered for them to count as a school. The tradition of Morrice and Lyman was strong among them, and following the lead of these elder painters the younger Montreal artists reacted violently against regionalism. Their greatest influences came from the School of Paris: Matisse, Picasso, and the surrealists. Almost overnight art in Montreal came up to date by European standards. The painters set about to make their art universal and aesthetic rather than particular and illustrative. Their appeal was to the visual and aesthetic

201 Alex Colville. *Hound in Field, 1958*

202 Alex Colville. *Child and Dog, 1952*



203 Goodridge Roberts. *Marian, 1939*

senses rather than to patriotism and geography. Their paintings were monumental, or decorative, or merely imaginative arrangements of colours and shapes. For these artists subject was only a starting-point—if indeed they used any subject-matter at all.

Like the School of Paris the Montreal artists consistently painted the human figure, thus breaking new ground in Canada. The earlier figures painted by Goodridge Roberts (1904-)[4] such as *Marian* (1939, coll. Maurice Corbeil, Montreal) expressed no regional or personal particularities, for Roberts was not interested in these things in any literal sense. Rather, the picture was an exercise in the relation of form to form and colour to colour. The same is true of his still life (*Still Life on Coral Tablecloth,* 1947, Private coll.), another of the traditional subjects of western art now revived in Canada. The table top, a teapot, and fruit provided a series of varied shapes to be organized into strong, harmonious compositions, as Cézanne had taught European artists to do. This monumental modern style is also evident in his landscapes. And yet

[4] *Jacques de Tonnancour,* Roberts *(Montreal, 1944); Goodridge Roberts, 'From this point I looked out',* Queen's Quarterly, *lx (1953), pp. 316-331.*

204 Goodridge Roberts. *Lake Orford, 1945*

these examples of conventional Canadian subject-matter show something else. Some landscapes like the water colour *Lake Orford* (1945, N.G.C.) have the simple strength and eternal calm of a Cézanne or a Claude Lorraine.* But this does not mean that a feeling for the Canadian scene is lacking; it is all the more deeply felt for being subtly expressed. The quality of the Canadian environment with its loneliness and raggedness are in fact nowhere so well expressed as in the serious, quiet style of Roberts' landscapes of 1948 (*Towards Evening*, 1948, Private coll.).

The full impact of modern French painting on Canada was to be felt in the work of other painters besides Roberts. One was Alfred Pellan

**Cf. Pl. 204*

205 Alfred Pellan. *Floraison*

206 Alfred Pellan. *Portrait de femme, 1937*

207 Jean Dallaire. *Calcul solaire, 1957*

(1906-)[5] whose return from Paris to Montreal in 1940 raised a storm in the calm waters of representational painting in Canada. In Paris he had participated in the abstract and surrealist movements and had won a prize for mural painting in 1935. Works of that period such as *Bouche rieuse* (1935, N.G.C.) reflect the genial influence of Miro and Léger, but already his art had a brilliance and conviction of its own. The introduction of French flair into Canadian painting was an event of first importance for it offered a direct challenge to staid Canadian ways. Yet Pellan could paint portraits like the *Portrait de femme* (*c.* 1937, coll. Joseph Barcelo, Montreal) which, in spite of all outside influences, have a directness and simplicity that conform to our established traditions.

But surrealism gained the ascendancy in Pellan's work. About 1945 he and his supporters laid siege to the old-fashioned École des Beaux-Arts in Montreal. They succeeded in dethroning its academic director and setting up Pellan in his place. A souvenir of the fracas is provided by a large and riotous canvas, *Surprise académique* (1945, coll. Maurice Corbeil, Montreal) which includes a toppling buffoon (the former director?) and a rising giant (Pellan?). Most of his paintings have, however, a more universal significance. Many are inspired by modern verse, especially the surrealist poems of Paul Éluard. In 1952 Pellan again

[5] *Maurice Gagnon,* Pellan *(Montreal, 1943); Pellan (exhibition catalogue, Paris, 1955);* Pellan *(exhibition catalogue, 1960); D. W. Buchanan,* Pellan *Toronto, (1962).*

208 Jacques de Tonnancour. *Paysage de juin*

forsook Canada for Paris, where he was the first Canadian to be given a one-man exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne. His pictures became daring in subject and violent in composition (*Floraison,* N.G.C.)*. But in 1955 he returned to Montreal. Expatriation is apparently no longer so easy for the Canadian artist as it once was.

During his years at the Beaux-Arts Pellan did much to stimulate the latent talent of French Canada. Léon Bellefleur (1910-), a self-trained painter influenced by Pellan, has become a full-fledged surrealist. The

*Pl. 205

thick tangle of lines in paintings such as *Algues fantômes* (1949, N.G.C.) recalls the work of European surrealists like Max Ernst and André Masson, though the rich colours still remind one of Pellan. Jean Dallaire (1916-) is an independent surrealist who spent his formative years in Paris painting and learning tapestry design under the influence of Lurçat. His style is notable for its combination of realism and humorous fancy. (*Calcul solaire,* 1957, N.G.C., *Pl. 207*).

Jacques de Tonnancour (1917-) felt the influence of Pellan as well as that of his first teacher Roberts. His earlier paintings like *Black Table with Rubber Plant* (1948, Art Gallery of Toronto), in spite of a distinctive and rather acid chord of colours, testify to the overwhelming influence of French painting. So great was his obsession with Matisse and Picasso that he had to stop painting for several years in order to free himself. Recently he has begun again with a series of landscapes which pro-

claim their distant relationship to Roberts. In these, however, the artist's own nervous energy of line adds a strong personal note. (*Paysage de juin,* 1957, N.G.C.)

Stanley Cosgrove (1911-) is sometimes listed as one of the 'Montreal School' but he stands apart from the others by reason of his early training under Orozco in Mexico. Like Roberts he seeks formal relationships within the limitations of classical subject-matter: the figure, the still life, and the landscape. His still life compositions such as *The Milk Jug* (1943, N.G.C.) have some affinities to Braque, for he is at pains to find the right placement of the objects on the canvas. His many landscapes of Mount Royal (*Landscape,* 1948, coll. Mrs H.A. Dyde, Edmonton)*, all showing the same clump of trees, form a series of variations on a theme. They also exemplify his strong Mexican line and chalky, southern colours. In the realm of figure painting he has recently achieved monumentality in a mural, *Wisdom*, commissioned in 1954 for the Collège de Saint-Laurent, Montreal.

Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960)[6] headed a separate coterie in Montreal, the Automatistes. These were a group of painters who chose to follow a more radical path than Pellan. In 1948 they issued an anarchistic manifesto, *Refus global,* that resulted in Borduas's dismissal from a teaching post. On one occasion they invaded the formal opening of an exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, wearing rough clothes

210 Stanley Cosgrove. *Sunlit forest*

211 Stanley Cosgrove. *Still Life with Milk Jug, 1943*

and carrying very rude banners. Borduas himself began as a pupil of Ozias Leduc at Saint-Hilaire and later studied in Paris. The atavism of his subject-matter in some of the earlier paintings like *La cavale infer-*

[6] *Robert Élie,* Borduas *(Montreal, 1943); Élie and Blais, 'Hommage à Paul-Émile Borduas',* Vie des Arts, *No. 19 (1960), pp. 18-31;* Borduas *(exhibition catalogue, 1962).*

* *Cf. Pl. 210*

Paul-Emile Borduas. *Sous le vent de l'île*

212 Paul-Emile Borduas. *Sea Gull, 1956*

nale (1943, coll. Luc Choquette, Montreal) shows what a direct effect the European expressionists and surrealists had on him. But maturer works such as *Sous le vent de l'île* (*c.* 1948, N.G.C.)* reveal a personal style in which rhythmic forms and deep, glowing colours are combined in free and almost musical association without reference to subject-matter. This is 'automatic' art which, according to the French writer André Breton, proceeded from the subconscious. Titles suggested by the forms resulting from the automatic process were added after the pictures were finished.

Whatever may be thought of this sort of painting and the theory behind it, it has become the almost universal language of art in the forties and fifties. Borduas is one of its best exponents. A close study of his canvases of the late forties may reveal a poetic insight into the nature of Canada and the Canadian environment that is not equalled elsewhere. The mood which they evoke was for me confirmed by what Borduas once told me about the pain of being a sensitive artist in a sober-sided, self-conscious, young-old country. In 1953 he gave up the struggle and went to New York. The brightness and effervescence which his paintings there took on indicate a keen sensitivity to his surroundings. Later he moved to Paris, where he died, and recent works like the handsome *Sea Gull* (1956, N.G.C.)† show an ultimate simplification of form and colour—only a few large black shapes against a white background. Well may one ask where modern painting can go from here!

Borduas' following in Montreal included several interesting artists who have developed the non-figurative, lyric manner along various independent lines. In the paintings and etchings of Albert Dumouchel (1916-) mysterious shapes loom out from dark, richly involved backgrounds—shapes suggestive of dim prehistory or ominous of the future. (*Le Poisson,* etching, 1951). Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923-)[7], now of Paris, is acknowledged as one of the world leaders of *tachisme* or 'action painting', terms which mean that the individual strokes of paint have a life of their own, as in Van Gogh. In his earlier canvases (*Toile, c.* 1950, coll. Pierre de Ligny Boudreau, Paris) the pigment was very thickly applied in intense colours, with dribbles of white flashing out against the encrusted darks. These and the somewhat later (and often mural-sized) paintings like *Knight Watch* (1953, N.G.C.)‡ have the power to awaken kaleidoscopic images in the mind of things seen from the air or under the microscope, bombings, or the splitting of the atom. For the Paris critic Georges Duthuit they are an expression of the artist's insight into the doom that threatens our civilization. Paradoxically they may strike one as superbly festive and as apocalyptic at the same time.

The artistic movement in Montreal also comprised the development

[7] *Pierre Schneider, 'Jean-Paul Riopelle',* L'Œil, *No. 18 (June, 1956), pp. 36-40; Jean Cathelin, 'Riopelle et le défi du peintre',* Vie des Arts, *No. 24 (1961), pp. 45-51.*

* *Pl. 209*
† *Pl. 212*
‡ *Pl. 215*

213 Louis Archambault
Oiseau de fer, 1950

214 Jean-Paul Riopelle. *La Roue*

of Louis Archambault (1915-) from an interesting ceramist into a major sculptor. The very large *Oiseau de fer* (1950, N.G.C.) was his first important work. When it was shown at an outdoor exhibition of sculpture in London in 1953 it attracted enough attention to become the subject of a David Low cartoon. While in Europe during the fifties Archambault felt various influences including that of Etruscan sculp-

215 Jean-Paul Riopelle. *Knight Watch, 1953*

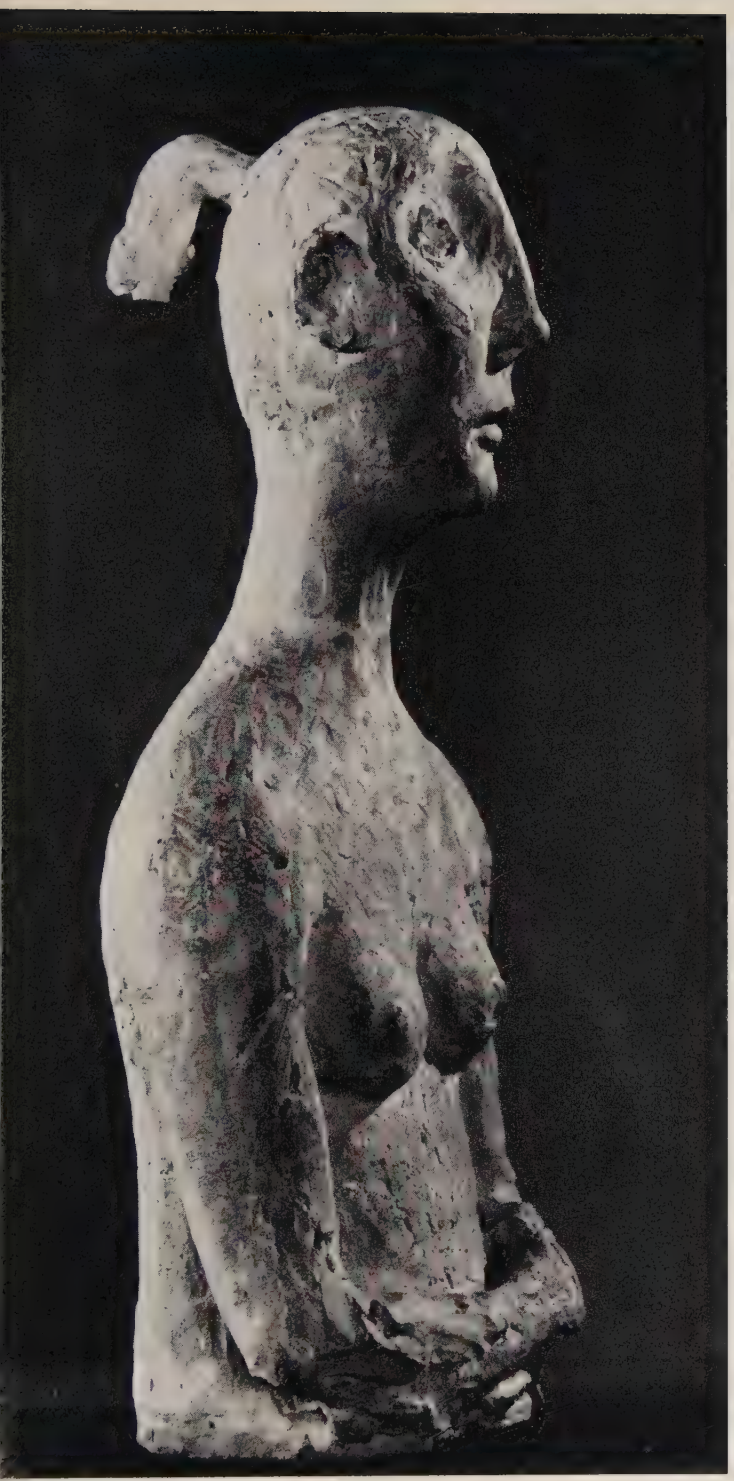
216 Kenneth Lochhead. *Bonspiel, 1954*

ture. This is seen in a number of his figures such as *Vence* (1954, coll. C. S. Band, Toronto). But in spite of all influences the power of his own personality has increased, and he is presently engaged in several large architectural commissions.

4

Meanwhile abstract and surrealist art had made its appearance in other places besides Montreal. In Quebec a youthful group including Edmund Alleyn (1932-) and Suzanne Bergeron (1930-) has welcomed the influence of recent European painters like Nicolas de Staël. But they are now striking out on their own*. Alleyn's present work (*Shore-line*, 1957, N.G.C.) is in the universal language of abstract expressionism.

**Cf. also Jean McEwen, Pl. 221*

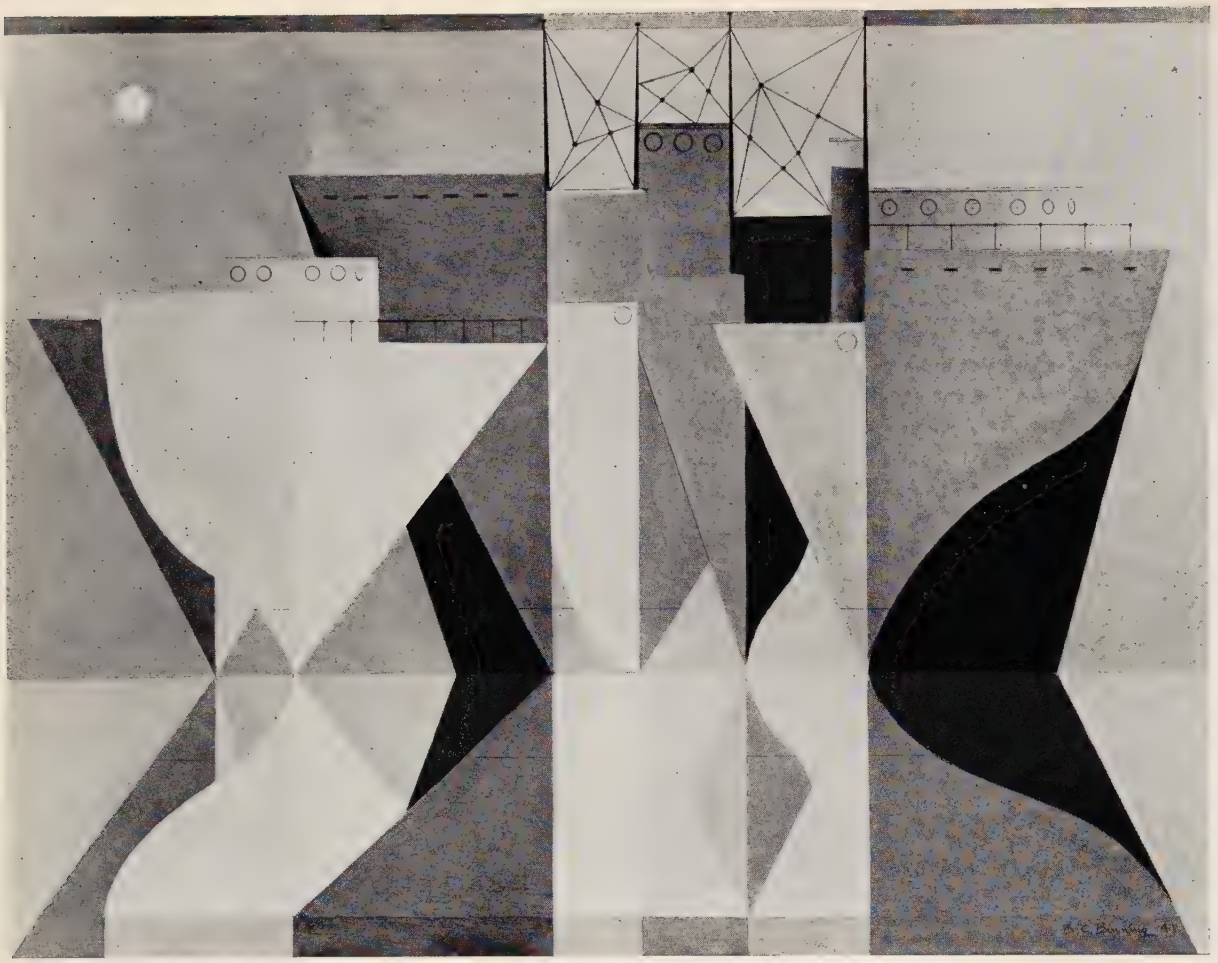


218 Louis Archambault. *Vence*

217 Suzanne Bergeron. *Arrière-port*

Two thousand miles away in Regina, Kenneth Lochhead (1926-) has employed a surrealist style that involves figures set upon the plain in such a way as to suggest the strange reality of a prairie mirage. (*Bonspiel,* 1954, Saskatchewan Arts Board, Regina).

219 Edmund Alleyn. *Shore-line, 1957*



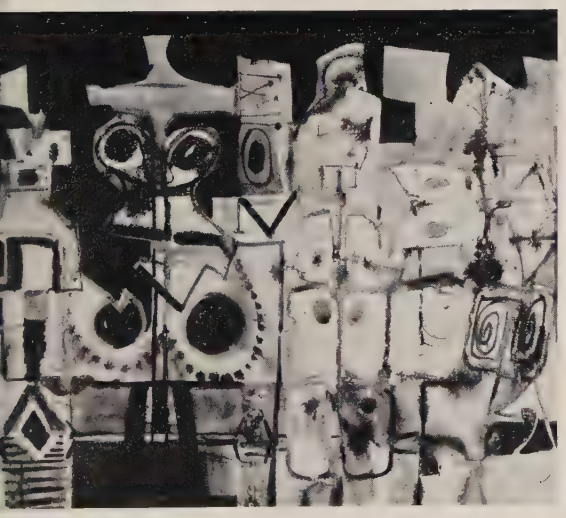
220 B. C. Binning. *Ships in Classical Calm, 1948*

Important groups have arisen in the great cities. In Vancouver a whole school has grown up during the forties and fifties under the leadership of two very different painters. The one is B.C. Binning (1909-) who is the master of decorative abstraction. His earlier pictures like *Ships in Classical Calm* (1948, N.G.C.) were based on marine forms and carried definite stylistic reminiscences of Ben Nicholson, Klee, and Miró. Lately he has abandoned these subjects for pure abstraction. (*Theme Painting,* 1953, N.G.C.). Binning is often commissioned to design murals or mosaics in connection with architecture. Related to him in style is John Korner (1913-), another muralist. His paintings are also architectural in character, though somewhat more complex in arrangement than those of Binning.

The other is Jack Shadbolt (1909-). His earlier paintings like those of his American west coast contemporary Morris Graves, may be described as 'animistic'. They are alive with animal and plant forms. Many are close-up views of grasses and sticks which assume the status of weird symbols of life, somewhat in the manner of Paul Klee but with a vitality that recalls Graham Sutherland's thorn studies (*Theme in Orange, Black, and White,* 1954, coll. D.C. Rowland, Toronto). Quite recently, after a year spent in France, Shadbolt has turned to a more ordered abstract style that brings his work more into harmony with that of Binning and Korner. Yet examples like *Medieval City* (1958, Vancouver Art Gallery) prove that he has not abandoned nature. In close sympathy with him are Bruno Bobak (1923-) and his wife Molly Lamb Bobak (1922-) whose work has an English and romantic flavour, and Gordon Smith (1919-) who paints plant forms which are even more

221 JEAN MCEWEN. *Fil à plomb dans l'orage*

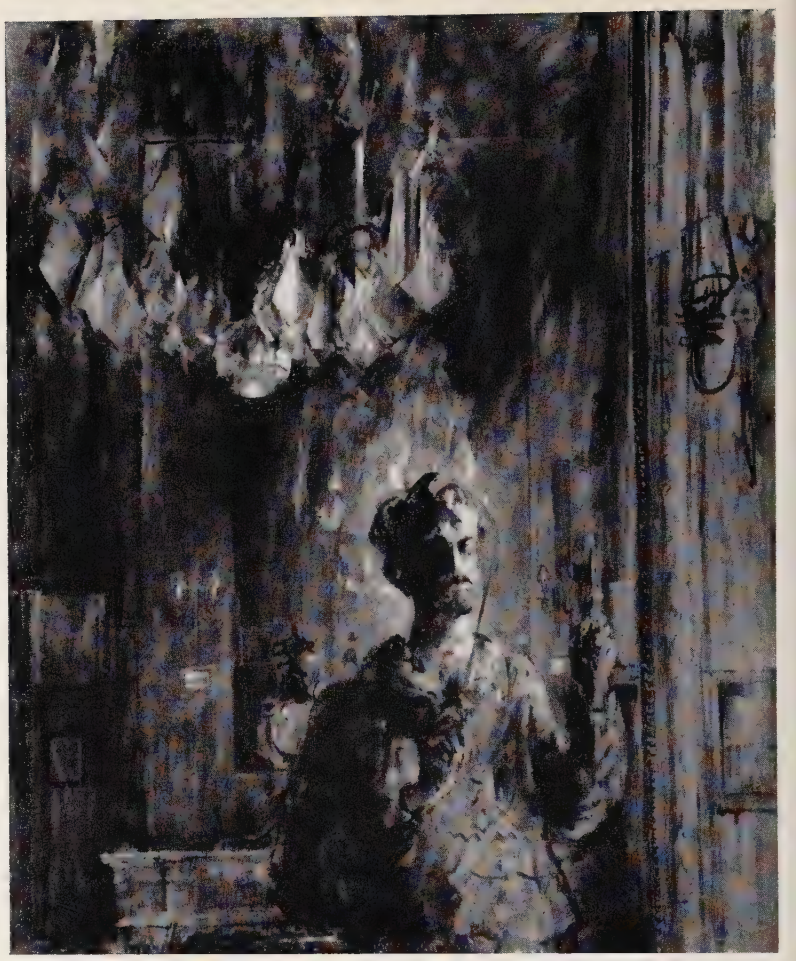
222 JACK SHADBOLT. *Medieval City*



23 JACK SHADBOLT
Theme in Orange, Black and White, 1954

224 GORDON SMITH. *Pruned Trees*

225 William Ronald. *Central Black, 1957*



226 Joseph Plaskett. *Le peintre émerveillé devant le monde, 1953-5*

closely interwoven than those of Shadbolt or Graham Sutherland. (Smith: *Pruned Trees,* 1955, N.G.C.)*. This group has produced an art which, like Emily Carr's, is an expression of the fertility of nature on the West Coast. Abstract though it may be, it is yet an interpretation of life.

Another stylistic trend, the poetic, appears in the work of Vancouver painters. The human situation weighs upon Donald Jarvis (1923-) whose paintings like *A Section of the Populace* (1953, N.G.C.) show a concern for urban society and its problems. On the other hand the work of Joseph Plaskett (1918-) is personal and melancholy. In the many pictures painted in his room on the Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris (*Le peintre émerveillé devant le monde,* 1953-5, N.G.C.) the colours are iridescent and fugitive, the expression introspective. They are always 'figurative'. Those of his pupil Takao Tanabe (1926-) may at first seem non-figurative until one realizes that they are made up of forms taken from the pine forests and reflections in mountain lakes. (*Fragment 35,* 1953, Private coll.).

Toronto, the artistic capital of the country during the period of the Group of Seven, is now regaining the position of leadership which it lost to Montreal and Vancouver. Some of the representational artists in Toronto have already been discussed. During the last few years abstract expressionism has also been cultivated by a group once called Painters Eleven. These included such varied individuals as William Ronald

*Pl. 224

227 Donald Jarvis. *A Section of the Populace, 1953*

(1926-) who now works in New York, Harold Town (1924-), and Kazuo Nakamura (1926-). The first two are related to the New York school through their studies under the famous teacher Hans Hofman. Ronald paints on such a large scale and in such violent colours and eruptive forms that canvases like *Central Black* (1956),* have been justly described as 'blockbusters'. Town is more inward in feeling and is perhaps best known for his 'single autographic prints' with their glowing colours and odd humour of interpretation. His collages like *Square in Nineveh* (1958, N.G.C.)† have the same qualities. Nakamura's work is delicate, almost monochromatic, and often linear (*Landscape,* 1955, N.G.C.). Other interesting and very young painters have appeared in Toronto, including Graham Coughtry (1931-) and Tony Urquhart (1934-). These are abstract expressionists of considerable power and conviction, but nature is present in their work. In such paintings as Urquhart's *The Enigma* (1958, N.G.C.) one sometimes feels that nature is ready to make its return to art.

228 Tony Urquhart. *The Enigma, 1958*

229 Graham Coughtry. *Shared Nights, 1957*

*Pl. 225
†Pl. 230

230 HAROLD TOWN. *Square in Nineveh, 1958*

5

It has been shown above that the International Style in modern architecture arrived rather belatedly in Canada during the thirties. It has been slow of acceptance. Not only has the style had to contend with the traditional Canadian attitude of caution but it has met with strong opposition from academic architecture. The struggle between the new and the old is perhaps best witnessed in Ottawa. Here official policy long kept important government building tied to the 'château style'. Uniformity and monumentality are the usual reasons given for resistance to the contemporary mode—reasons which are not unknown in other capital cities of the world. Non-government building has taken up the challenge. The new buildings of Carleton University (1958-9, by Hart Massey; Balharrie, Helmer, and Morin; and others) and the City Hall (1958, by Rother, Bland, and Trudeau of Montreal)* are typical contemporary structures of steel and glass. With their Mondrian-like exterior designs they represent a style that is universal in modern architecture.

In central and western Canada—the force of tradition becomes weaker the further west one goes—the new architecture is now well established. In Toronto the productions of the John B. Parkin Associates are typical of the good modern design appearing in that rapidly expanding city. Their work (John C. Parkin house, 1957, Don Mills, Ontario)† reflects the severity of Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. This modern classicism of design and the use of standard materials make a building as independent of its setting and of geography as a Regency house. Throughout the world there is found little adaptation to the character of particular regions, little exploitation of local materials to indicate any great desire to create distinctive regional styles. Conditions seem to militate against nationalism in architecture as in painting or sculpture.

*Pl. 235 †Pl. 233

231 HART MASSEY. *The Maxwell MacOdrum Library, Carleton University, Ottawa*

232 Thomson, Berwick and Pratt
British Columbia Electric Building, Vancouver

Only in Vancouver may one find any noticeable relaxation in Canada of this rigid internationalism or any suggestion that some architects are seeking a Canadian style. In the mild climate of the West Coast the architects of private houses can afford to design lightly and informally. Natural surroundings of great beauty give an incentive to blend the designs into the landscape*. A few subscribe to the theory of 'organic' architecture which derives from Frank Lloyd Wright and is at opposite poles from contemporary classicism. Thus some houses seem almost to grow out of their settings. But Vancouver is not without its standard steel-and-glass cages. The British Columbia Electric Building (1958, by Thomson, Berwick, and Pratt) is a handsome example that takes full advantage of the airy blue colour of its material, aluminium. B.C. Binning designed the mosaics at the entrance.

6

The romanticism displayed by some architects and the gradual reappearance of nature in the work of some painters indicate one possible future reaction to world-wide abstraction. Prudence, however, forbids one to prophesy whether one trend or another will prevail. One can be sure of only one thing: that Canada has no lack of talented artists today, and with growing public interest they will develop our art along new lines. For myself I should like to think that the old Canadian traditions—directness, sober restraint, and honest expression—that were formed over a period of three centuries would continue to operate in the future. There is grave danger that they may be lost because of their irrelevancy to anything in the space age.

This for the moment is the end of history. But contemporary art is a continued story, with a new chapter ready to come out as soon as the last one is in print. One wonders what we shall think of this chapter if we are able to read it again twenty or thirty years hence.

*Pl. 234

233 John B. Parkin Associates. *John C. Parkin house, Don Mills, Ontario, 1958*

234 Arthur Erickson. *Robert M. Filberg house, Vancouver Island*

235 Rother, Bland and Trudeau. *City Hall, Ottawa, from Green Island, 1958*

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